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# HETTY WESLEY

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# HETTY WESLEY

BY

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ETC., ETC.



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TO

ANDREW LANG

A GOOD CHAMPION OF HETTY

# HETTY WESLEY

## BOOK I

### PROLOGUE

*"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

AT Surat, by a window of his private office in the East India Company's factory, a middle-aged man stared out upon the broad river and the wharves below. Business in the factory had ceased for the day: clerks and porters had gone about their own affairs, and had left the great building strangely cool and empty and silent. The wharves, too, were deserted — all but one where a Hindu sat in the shade of a pile of luggage, and the top of a boat's mast wavered like the index of a balance above the edge of the landing-stairs.

The luggage belonged to the middle-aged man at the window: the boat was to carry him down the river to the *Albemarle*, East Indiaman, anchored in the roads with her Surat cargo aboard. She would sail that night for Bombay and thence away for England.

He was ready; dressed for his journey in a loose white suit, which, though designed for the East, was almost aggressively British. A Cheapside tailor had cut it, and,

had it been black or gray or snuff-coloured instead of white, its wearer might have passed, all the way from the Docks to Temple Bar, for a solid merchant on 'Change — a self-respecting man, too, careless of dress for appearance' sake, but careful of it for his own, and as part of a habit of neatness. He wore no wig (though the date was 1723), but his own gray hair, brushed smoothly back from a sufficiently handsome forehead and tied behind with a fresh black ribbon. In his right hand he held a straw hat, broad-brimmed like a Quaker's, and a white umbrella with a green lining. His left fingered his clean-shaven chin as he gazed on the river.

The ceremonies of leave-taking were done with; so far as he could, he had avoided them. He had ever been a hard man and knew well enough that the clerks disliked him. He hated humbug. He had come to India, almost forty years ago, not to make friends, but to make a fortune. And now the fortune was made, and the room behind him stood ready, spick and span, for the Scotsman who would take his chair to-morrow. Drawers had been emptied and dusted, loose papers and memoranda sorted and either burnt or arranged and docketed, ledgers entered up to the last item in his firm handwriting, and finally closed. The history of his manhood lay shut between their covers, written in figures terser than a Roman classic: his grand *coup* in Nunsasee goods, Abdul Guffere's debt commuted for 500,000 rupees, the salvage of the *Ramillies* wreck, his commercial duel with Viltul Parrak . . . And the record had no loose ends. He owed no man a farthing.

The door behind him opened softly, and a small gray-headed man peered into the room.

"Mr. Annesley, if I might take the liberty —"

"Ah, MacNab?" Samuel Annesley swung round promptly.

"I trust, sir, I do not intrude?"

"'Intrude,' man? Why?"

"Oh, nothing, sir," answered the little man vaguely, with a dubious glance at Mr. Annesley's eyes. "Only I thought perhaps — at such a moment — old scenes, old associations — and you leaving us for ever, sir!"

"Tut, nonsense. You have something to say to me. Anything forgotten?"

"Nothing in the way of business, sir. But it occurred to me —" Mr. MacNab lowered his voice, "— your good lady, up at the burial-ground. You will excuse me — at such a time: but it may be years before I am spared to return home, and if I can do anything in the way of looking after the grave, I shall be proud. Oh, no —" he went on hurriedly with a flushed face; "for *love*, sir; for love, of course, or, as I should rather say, for old sake's sake, if that's not too bold. It would be a privilege, Mr. Annesley."

Samuel Annesley stood considering his late confidential clerk with bent brows. "I am much obliged to you, MacNab, but in this matter you must do as you please. You are right in supposing that I was sincerely attached to my wife —"

"Indeed yes, sir."

"But I have none of the sentiment you give me credit

for. 'Let the dead bury the dead'—that is a text to which I have given some attention of late, and I hope to profit by it in—in the future."

"Well, God bless you, Mr. Annesley!"

"I thank you. We are delaying the boat, I fear. No"—as Mr. MacNab made an offer to accompany him—"I prefer to go alone. We have shaken hands already. The room is ready for Mr. Menzies, when he comes to-morrow. Good-by."

A minute later Mr. MacNab, lingering by the window, saw him cross the road to the landing-stage and stand for a moment in talk with the Hindu, Bhagwan Dass. Then his straw hat disappeared down the steps. The boat was pushed off and Bhagwan Dass, after watching it for a while, turned without emotion and came strolling across to the factory.

On board the *Albemarle* Mr. Annesley found the best cabin prepared for him, as became his importance. He went below at once and was only seen at meal-times during the short voyage to Bombay, a town that of late years had almost eclipsed Surat in trade and importance. Here Captain Bewes was to take in the bulk of his passengers and cargo, and brought his vessel close alongside the Bund. During the three days occupied in lading and stowing little order was maintained, and the decks lay open to a promiscuous crowd of coolies and porters, waterside loafers, beggars, and thieves. The officers kept an eye open for these last; the rest they tolerated until the moment came for warping out, when the custom was to pipe all hands and clear the ship of intruders by a general rush.

The first two days Mr. Annesley spent upon the poop, watching the mob with a certain scornful interest. On the third he did not appear, but was served with *tiffin* in his cabin. At about six o'clock, the second mate — a Mr. Orchard — sought the captain to report that all was ready and waiting the word to cast off. His way led past Mr. Annesley's cabin, and there he came upon an old mendicant stooping over the door-handle and making as if to enter and beg, whom he clouted across the shoulders and cuffed up the companion-ladder. Mr. Orchard afterwards remembered to have seen this same beggar man, or the image of him, off and on during the two previous days, seated asquat against a post on the Bund, and watching the *Albemarle*, with his crutch and bowl beside him.

When the rush came, this old man, bent and blear-eyed, was swept along the gangway like a chip on the tide. In pure lightness of heart a sailor, posted at the head of the plank, expedited him with a kick. "That'll do for good-by to India," said he, grinning.

The old man showed no resentment, but was borne along bewildered, gripping his bowl to his breast. On the quay's edge he seemed to find his feet, and shuffled off towards the town, without once looking back at the ship.

# I

"MILL — mill! A mill!"

At the entrance of Dean's Yard, Westminster, a small King's Scholar, waving his gown and yelling, collided with an old gentleman hobbling round the corner, and sat down suddenly in the gutter with a squeal, as a bagpipe collapses. The old gentleman rotated on one leg like a dervish, made an ineffectual stoop to clutch his gouty toe, and wound up by bringing his rattan cane smartly down on the boy's shoulders.

"Owgh! Owgh! Stand up, you young villain! My temper's hasty, and here's a shilling-piece to cry quits. Stand up and tell me now — is it Fire, Robbery, or Murder?"

The youngster pounced at the shilling, shook off the hand on his collar, and darted down Little College Street to Hutton's Boarding House, under the windows of which he pulled up and executed a derisive war-dance.

"Hutton's, Hutton's,
Put up your buttons,
Hutton's are rottenly Whigs —

"Mill — mill! Come out and carry home your Butcher Randall! You'll be wanted when Wesley has done with him."

He was speeding back by this time, and flung this last

taunt from a safe distance. The old gentleman collared him again by the entry.

"Stop, my friend — here, hold hard for a moment! A fight, you said: and Wesley — was it Wesley?"

The boy nodded.

"Charles Wesley?"

"Well, it wouldn't be Samuel — at *his* age: now would it?" The boy grinned. The Reverend Samuel Wesley was the respected Head Usher of Westminster School.

"And what will Charles Wesley be fighting about?"

"How should I know? Because he wants to, belike. But I was told it began up school, with Randall's flinging a book at young Murray for a lousy Scotch Jacobite."

"H'm: and where will it be?"

The boy dropped his voice to a drawl. "In Fighting-green, I believe, sir: they told me Poets' Corner was already bespoke for a turn-up between the Dean and Sall the charwoman, with the head verger for bottle-holder —"

"Now look here, young jackanapes —" But young jackanapes, catching sight of half-a-dozen boys — the vanguard of Hutton's — at the street corner, ducked himself free and raced from vengeance across the yard.

The old gentleman followed; and the crowd from Hutton's, surging past, showed him the way to Fighting-green; where a knot of King's Scholars politely made room for him, perceiving that in spite of his small stature, his rusty wig and countrified brown suit, he was a person of some dignity and no little force of character. They read it perhaps in the set of his mouth, perhaps in the

high aquiline arch of his nose, which he fed with snuff as he gazed round the ring while the fighters rested, each in his corner, after the first round: for a mill at Westminster was a ceremonious business, and the Head Master had been known to adjourn school for one.

"H'm," said the new-comer; "no need to ask which is Wesley."

His eyes—set deep beneath brows bristling like a wire-haired terrier's—were on the boy in the farther corner, who sat on his backer's knee, shoeless, stripped to the buff, with an angry red mark on the right breast below the collar-bone; a slight boy and a trifle undersized, but lithe, clear-skinned, and in the pink of condition; a handsome boy, too. By his height you might have guessed him under sixteen, but his face set you doubting. There are faces almost uncannily good-looking: they charm so confidently that you shrink from predicting the good fortune they claim, and bethink you that the gods' favourites are said to die young: and Charles Wesley's was such a face. He tightened the braces about his waist and stepped forward for the second round with a sweet and serious smile. Yet his mouth meant business.

Master Randall—who stood near three inches taller—though nicknamed "Butcher," was merely a dull heavy-shouldered Briton, dogged, hard to beat; the son of a South Sea merchant, retired and living at Barnet, who swore by Walpole and King George. But at Westminster these convictions—and, confound it! they were the convictions of England, after all—met with scurrilous derision; and here Master Randall nursed a dull and

inarticulate resentment in a world out of joint, where the winning side was a butt for epigrams. To win, and be laughed at! To have the account reopened in lampoons and witticisms, contemptible but irritating, when it should be closed by the mere act of winning! It puzzled him, and he brooded over it, turning sulky in the end, not vicious. It was in no viciousness that he had flung a book at young Murray's head and called him a lousy Jacobite, but simply to provoke Wesley and get his grievance settled by intelligible weapons, such as fists.

He knew his to be the unpopular side, and that even Freind, the Head Master, would chuckle over the defeat of a Whig. Outside of Hutton's, who cheered him for the honour of their house, he had few well-wishers; but among them was a sprinkling of boys bearing the great Whig names—Cowpers, Sackvilles, Osborns—for whose sake and for its own tradition the ring would give him fair play.

The second round began warily, Wesley sparring for an opening, Randall defensive, facing round and round, much as a bullock fronts a terrier. He knew his game; to keep up his guard and wait for a chance to get in with his long left. He was cunning, too, appeared slower than he was, tempting the other to take liberties, and, towards the end of the round, to step in a shade too closely. It was but a shade. Wesley, watching his eye, caught an instant's warning, flung his head far back and sprang away—not quickly enough to avoid a thud on the ribs. It rattled him, but did no damage, and it taught him his lesson.

Round 3. Tempted in turn by his slight success, Randall shammed slow again. But once bitten is twice shy, and this time he overreached himself, in two senses. His lunge, falling short, let in the little one, who dealt him a double knock — rap, rap, on either side of the jaw — before breaking away. Stung out of caution he rushed and managed to close, but took a third rap which cut his upper lip. First blood to Wesley. The pair went to grass together, Randall on top. But it was the Tories who cheered.

Round 4. Randall, having bought his experience, went back to sound tactics. This and the next two rounds were uninteresting and quite indecisive, though at the end of them Wesley had a promising black eye and Randall was bleeding at mouth and nose. The old gentleman rubbed his chin and took snuff. This Fabian fighting was all against the lighter weight, who must tire in time.

Yet he did not look like tiring, but stepped out for Round 7 with the same inscrutable smile. Randall met it with a shame faced grin — really a highly creditable, good-natured grin, though the blood about his mouth did its meaning some injustice. And with this there happened that which dismayed many and puzzled all. Wesley's fists went up, but hung, as it were, impotent for the moment, while his eyes glanced aside from his adversary's and rested, with a stiffening of surprise, on the corner of the ring where the old gentleman stood. A cry went up from the King's Scholars — a groan and a warning. At the sound he flung back his head instinctively —

as Randall's left shot out, caught him on the apple of the throat, and drove him staggering back across the green.

The old gentleman snapped down the lid of his snuff-box, and at the same moment felt a hand gripping him by the elbow. "Now, how the —" he began, turning as he supposed to address a Westminster boy, and found himself staring into the face of a lady.

He had no time to take stock of her. And although her fingers pinched his arm, her eyes were all for the fight.

It had been almost a knock-down; but young Wesley just saved himself by touching the turf with his finger-tips and, resting so, crouched for a spring. What is more, he timed it beautifully; helped by Randall himself, who followed up at random, demoralized by the happy fluke and encouraged by the shouts of Hutton's to "finish him off." In the fall Wesley had most of his remaining breath thumped out of him; but this did not matter. He had saved the round.

The old gentleman nodded. "Well recovered: very pretty — very pretty indeed." He turned to the lady. "I beg your pardon, madam —"

"I beg yours, sir." She withdrew her hand from his arm.

"If he can swallow that down, he may win yet."

"Please God!"

She stood almost a head taller than he, and he gazed up into a singularly noble face, proud and strong, somewhat pinched about the lips, but having such eyes and brows as belong to the few accustomed to confront great

thoughts. It gave her the ineffable touch of greatness which more than redeemed her shabby black gown and antique bonnet; and, on an afterthought, the old gentleman decided that it must have been beautiful in its day. Just now it was pale, and one hand clutched the silk shawl crossed upon her bosom. He noted, too, that the hand was shapely, though roughened with housework where the mitten did not hide it.

She had scarcely glanced at him, and after a while he dropped his scrutiny and gazed with her across the ring.

"H'm," said he, "dander up, this time."

"Yes," the lady answered, "I know that look, sir, though I have never seen it on *him*. And I trust to see him wear it, one day, in a better cause."

"Tut, madam, the cause is good enough. You don't tell me I'm talking to a Whig? — not that I'd dispute with a lady, Whig or Tory."

"A Whig?" She fetched up a smile: she had evidently a reserve of mirth. "Indeed, no: but I was thinking, sir, of the cause of Christ."

"Oh!" said the old gentleman shortly, and took snuff.

They were right. Young Wesley stepped out this time with a honeyed smile, but with a new-born light in his hazel eyes — a dæmonic light, lambent and almost playful. Master Randall, caressed by them, read the danger signal a thought too late. A swift and apparently reckless feint drew another of his slogging strokes, and in a flash the enemy was under his guard. Even so, for the fraction of a second, victory lay in his arms, a clear gift to be embraced: a quick crook of the elbow, and Master

Wesley's head and neck would be snugly in Chancery. Master Wesley knew it—knew, further, that there was no retreat, and that his one chance hung on getting in his blow first and disabling with it. He jabbed it home with his right, a little below the heart: and in a second the inclosing fore-arm dragged limp across his neck. He pressed on, aiming for the point of the jaw; but slowly lowered his hands as Randall tottered back two steps with a face of agony, dropped upon one knee, clutching at his breast, and so to the turf, where he writhed for a moment and fainted.

As the ring broke up, cheering, and surged across the green, the old gentleman took snuff again and snapped down the lid of his box.

"Good," said he; then to the lady, "Are you a relative of his?"

"I am his mother, sir."

## II

SHE moved across the green to the corner where Charles was coolly sponging his face and chest over a basin. "In a moment, ma'am," said he, looking up with a twinkle in his eye as the boys made way for her.

She read the meaning of it and smiled at her own mistake as she drew back the hand she had put out to take the sponge from him. He was her youngest, and she had seen him but twice since, at the age of eight, he had left home for Westminster School. In spite of the evidence of her eyes he was a small child still — until his voice warned her.

She drew back her hand at once. Boys scorn any show of feeling, even between mother and son, and Charles should not be ridiculed on her account. So he sponged away and she waited, remembering how she had taught him, when turned a year old, to cry softly after a whipping. Ten children she had brought up in a far Lincolnshire parsonage, and without sparing the rod; but none had been allowed to disturb their father in his study where he sat annotating the Scriptures or turning an heroic couplet or adding up his tangled household accounts.

A boy pushed through the group around the basin, with news that Butcher Randall had come-to from his swoon and wished to shake hands: and almost before Charles

could pick up a towel and dry himself the fallen champion appeared with a somewhat battered grin.

"No malice," he mumbled: "nasty knock—better luck next time."

"Come, I say," protested Charles, shaking hands and pulling a mock face, "is there going to be a next time?"

"Well, you don't suppose I'm *convinced*—" Randall began: but Mrs. Wesley broke in with a laugh.

"There's old England for you!" She brought her mittened palms together as if to clap them, but they rested together in the very gesture of prayer. "'Won't be convinced,' you say, 'but oh, when it's done you are worth it! Nay—don't hide your face, sir. Wounds for an honest belief are not shameful, and I can only hope that in your place my son would have shown so fair a temper."

"Whe-ew!" one of the taller boys whistled. "It's Wesley's mother!"

"She was watching, too: the last two rounds at any rate. I saw her."

"And I."

"— and so cool it might have been a dog-fight in Tuttle Fields. Your servant, ma'am!" The speaker made her a boyish bow and lifted his voice, "Three cheers for Mrs. Wesley!"

They were given — the first two with a will. The third tailed off; and Mrs. Wesley, looking about her, laughed again as the boys, suddenly turned shy or overtaken by a sense of delicacy, backed away sheepishly and left her alone with her son.

"Put on your shirt," said she, and again her hand

went out to help him. "I want you to take a walk with me."

Charles nodded. "Have you seen Sam?"

"Yes. You may kiss me now, dear — there's nobody looking. I left him almost an hour ago: his leg is mending, but he cannot walk with us. He promises, though, to come to Johnson's Court this evening — I suppose, in a sedan-chair — and greet your uncle Annesley, whom I have engaged to take back to supper. You knew, of course, that I should be lodging there?"

"Sammy told me on Sunday, but could not say when you would be arriving."

"I reached London last night, and this morning your uncle Matthew came to my door with word that the *Albemarle* had entered the river. I think you are well enough to walk to the Docks with me."

"Well enough? Of course I am. But why not take a waterman from the stairs here?"

"'Twill cost less to walk and hire a boat at Blackwall, if necessary. Your father could give me very little money, Charles; we seem to be as poorly off as ever."

"And this uncle Annesley —" he began, but paused with a glance at his mother, whose face had suddenly grown hot. "What sort of a man is he?"

"My boy," she said with an effort, "I must not be ashamed to tell my child what I am not ashamed to hope. He is rich: he once promised to do much for Emmy and Sukey, and these promises came to nothing. But now that his wife is dead and he comes home with neither chick nor child, I see no harm in praying that his

heart may be moved towards his sister's children. At least I shall be frank with him and not hide my hope, let him treat it as he will." She was silent for a moment.

"Are *all* women unscrupulous when they fight for their children? They cannot all be certain, as I am, that their children were born for greatness: and yet, I wonder sometimes —" She wound up with a smile which held something of a playful irony, but more of sadness.

"Jacky could not come with you?"

"No, and he writes bitterly about it. He is tied to Oxford — by lack of pence, again."

By this time Charles had slipped on his jacket, and the pair stepped out into the streets and set their faces eastward. Mrs. Wesley was cockney-bred and delighted in the stir and rush of life. She, the mother of many children, kept a well-poised figure and walked with the elastic step of a maid; and as she went she chatted, asking a score of shrewd questions about Westminster — the masters, the food, the old dormitory in which Charles slept, the new one then rising to replace it; breaking off to recognize some famous building or pause and gaze after a company of His Majesty's guards. Her own masterful carriage and unembarrassed mode of speech — "as if all London belonged to her," Charles afterwards described it — drew the stares of the passers-by; stares which she misinterpreted, for in the gut of the Strand, a few paces beyond Somerset House, she suddenly twirled the lad about and "Bless us, child, your eye's enough to frighten the town! 'Tis to be hoped brother Sam has not

turned Quaker in India; or that Sally the cook-maid has a beefsteak handy."

Mr. Matthew Wesley, apothecary and by courtesy "surgeon," to whose house in Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, they presently turned aside, had not returned from his morning's round of visits. He was a widower and took his meals irregularly. But Sally had two covers laid, with a pot of freshly drawn porter beside each; and here, after Charles's eye had been attended to and the swelling reduced, they ate and drank and rested for half an hour before resuming their walk.

So far, and until they reached the Tower, their road was familiar enough; but from Smithfield onwards they had to halt and inquire their way again and again in intervals of threading the traffic which poured out of cross-streets and to and from the docks on their right — wagons empty, wagons laden with hides, jute, scrap-iron, tallow, indigo, woollen bales, ochre, sugar; trollies and pack-horses; here and there a cordon of porters and warehousemen trundling barrels as nonchalantly as a child his hoop. The business of piloting his mother through these cross tides left Charles little time for observation; but one incident of that walk he never forgot.

They were passing Shadwell when they came on a knot of people and two watchmen posted at the corner of a street across which a reek of smoke mingled with clouds of gritty dust. Twice or thrice they heard a crash or dull rumble of falling masonry. A distillery had been blazing there all night and a gang of workmen was now clearing the ruins. But as Charles and his mother came

by the corner, the knot of people parted and gave passage to a line of stretchers — six stretchers in all, and on each a body, which the bearers had not taken the trouble to cover from view. A bystander said that these were men who had run back into the building to drink the flaming spirit, and had dropped insensible, and been crushed when the walls fell in. The boy had never seen death before; and at the sight of it thrust upon him in this brutal form, he put out a hand towards his mother to find that she too was swaying.

"Hallo!" cried the same bystander, "look out there! the lady's fainting."

But Mrs. Wesley steadied herself. "'Tis not *that*," she gasped, at the same time waving him off; "'tis the fire — the fire!" And stepping by the crossing she fled along the street with Charles at her heels, nor ceased running for another hundred yards. "You do not remember," she began, turning at length; "no, of course you do not. You were a babe, not two years old; nurse snatched you out of bed —"

The odd thing was that, despite the impossibility, Charles seemed to remember quite clearly. As a child he had heard his sisters talk so often of the fire at Epworth Rectory that the very scene — and especially Jacky's escape — was bitten on the blank early pages as a real memory. He had half a mind now to question his mother about it and startle her with details, but her face forbade him.

She recovered her colour in bargaining with a waterman at Blackwall Stairs. Two stately Indiamen lay

out on the river below, almost side by side; and, as it happened, the farther one was at that moment weighing her anchor, indeed had it tripped on the cathead. A cloud of boats hung about her, trailing astern as her head-sails drew and she began to gather way on the falling tide.

The waterman, a weedy loafer with a bottle nose and watery blue eyes, agreed to pull across for threepence; but no sooner were they embarked and on the tide-way, than he lay on his oars and jerked his thumb towards the moving ship. "Make it a crown, ma'am, and I'll overhaul her," he hiccupped.

Mrs. Wesley glanced towards the two ships and counted down threepence deliberately upon the thwart facing her, at the same time pursing up her lips to hide a smile. For the one ship lay moored stem and stern with her bows pointed up the river, and the other, drifting past, at this moment swung her tall poop into view with her windows flashing against the afternoon sun, and beneath them her name, the *Josiah Childs*, in tall gilt letters.

"Better make it a crown, ma'am," the waterman repeated with a drunken chuckle.

Mrs. Wesley rose in her seat. Her hand went up, and Charles made sure she meant to box the man's ears. He could not see the look on her face, but whatever it was it cowed the fellow, who seized his oars again and began to pull for dear life, as she sat back and laid her hand on the tiller.

"Easy, now," she commanded, after twenty strokes or

so. "Easy, and ship your oar, unless you want it broken!" But for answer he merely stared at her, and a moment later his starboard oar snapped its thole-pin like a carrot, and hurled him back over his thwart as the boat ran alongside the *Albemarle's* ladder.

"My friend," said Mrs. Wesley coolly, "you have a pestilent habit of not listening. I hired you to row me to the *Albemarle*, and this, I believe, is she." Then, with a glance up at the half-dozen grinning faces above the bulwarks, "Can I see Captain Bewes?"

"Your servant, ma'am." The captain appeared at the head of the ladder; a red apple-cheeked man in shirt-sleeves and clean white nankeen breeches, who looked like nothing so much as an overgrown schoolboy.

"Is Mr. Samuel Annesley on board?"

Captain Bewes rubbed his chin. He had grown suddenly grave. "I beg your pardon," said he, "but are you a kinswoman of Mr. Annesley's?"

"I am his sister, sir."

"Then I'll have to ask you to step on board, ma'am. You may dismiss that rascal, and one of my boats shall put you ashore."

He stepped some way down the ladder to meet her and she took his hand with trepidation, while the *Albemarle's* crew leaned over and taunted the cursing waterman.

"There — that will do, my man. I don't allow swearing here. Steady, ma'am, that's right; and now give us a hand, youngster."

"Is — is he ill?" Mrs. Wesley stammered.

"Who? Mr. Annesley? Not to my knowledge, ma'am."

"Then he is on board? We heard he had taken passage with you."

"Why, so he did; and, what's more, to the best of my knowledge, he sailed. It's a serious matter, ma'am, and we're all at our wits' ends over it; but the fact is — Mr. Annesley has disappeared."

## III

THAT same evening, in Mr. Matthew Wesley's parlour, Johnson's Court, Captain Bewes told the whole story — or so much of it as he knew. The disappearance from on board his ship of a person so important as Mr. Samuel Annesley touched his prospects in the Company's service, and he did not conceal it. He had already reported the affair at the East India House and was looking forward to a highly uncomfortable interview with the Board of Governors: but he was concerned, too, as an honest man; and had jumped at Mrs. Wesley's invitation to sup with her in Johnson's Court and tell what he could.

Mr. Matthew Wesley, as host, sat at the head of his table and puffed at a churchwarden pipe; a small, narrow-featured man, in a chocolate-coloured suit, with steel buttons, and a wig of professional amplitude. On his right sat his sister-in-law, her bonnet replaced by a tall white cap: on his left the Captain in his shore-going clothes. He and the apothecary had mixed themselves a glass apiece of Jamaica rum, hot, with sugar and lemon-peel. At the foot of the table, with his injured leg supported on a cushion, reclined the Reverend Samuel Wesley, Junior, Usher of Westminster School, his gaunt cheeks (he was the plainest featured of the Wesleys)

wan with recent illness, and his eyes fixed on Captain Bewes's chubby face.

"Well, as I told you, Mr. Annesley's cabin lay beside my state-room, with a window next to mine in the stern: and, as I showed Mrs. Wesley to-day, my state-room opens on the 'captain's cabin' (as they call it), where I have dined as many as two dozen before now, and where I do the most of my work. This has three windows directly under the big poop-lantern. I was sitting, that afternoon, at the head of the mahogany swing table (just as you might be sitting now, sir), with my back to the light and the midmost of the three windows wide open behind me, for air. I had the ship's chart spread before me when my second mate, Mr. Orchard, knocked at the door with word that all was ready to cast off. I asked him a few necessary questions, and while he stood there chatting I heard a splash just under my window. Well, that might have been anything — a warp cast off and the slack of it striking the water, we'll say. Whatever it was, I heard it, turned about, and with one knee on the window-locker (I remember it perfectly) took a glance out astern. I saw nothing to account for the sound: but I knew of a dozen things which might account for it — anything, in fact, down to some lazy cabin-boy heaving the dinner-scraps overboard: and having, as you'll understand, a dozen matters on my mind at the moment, I thought no more of it, but turned to Mr. Orchard again and picked up our talk. To this day I don't know that there was anything in the sound, but 'tis fair to tell you all I can." — Captain Bewes took a sip at his grog and

over the rim looked down the table towards Samuel, who nodded.

The Captain nodded back, set down his glass, and resumed. "Quite so. The next thing is that Mr. Orchard, returning to deck two minutes later and having to pass the door of Mr. Annesley's cabin on his way, ran against an old Hindu beggar crouching there, fingering the door-handle and about to enter—or so Orchard supposed, and kicked him up the companion. He told me about it himself, next day, when we found the cabin empty and I began to make inquiries. 'Now here,' says you, 'here's a clue,' and I'm not denying but it may be one. Only when you look into it, what does it amount to? Mr. Annesley—saving your presence—was known for a stern man: you may take it for certain he'd made enemies over there, and these Hindus are the devil (saving your presence again, ma'am) for nursing a grudge. 'Keep a stone in your pocket seven years: turn it, keep it for another seven; 'twill be ready at hand for your enemy'—that's their way. But, to begin with, an old *jogi* is nothing strange to meet on a ship before she clears: these beggars in the East will creep in anywhere. And, next, you'll hardly maintain that an old beggarman ('seventy years old, if a day,' said Orchard) was going to take an active man like Mr. Annesley and cram him bodily through a cabin window? 'Tis out of nature. And yet when we broke into his cabin, twenty-four hours later, there was not a trace of him: only his boxes neatly packed, his watch hanging to the beam and just running down, a handful of gold and silver tossed on to the bunk

—just as he might have emptied it from his pockets—nothing else, and the whole cabin neat as a pin."

"But," objected Mr. Matthew Wesley, "if this *jogi*—or whatever you call him—had entered the cabin for no good, he would hardly have missed the money lying on the bunk."

"Sir, you must not judge these eastern mendicants by your London beggars. They are not thieves, nor avaricious, but religious men practising self-denial, who collect alms merely to support life, and believe that money so bestowed blesses the giver."

"A singularly perverted race!" was the apothecary's comment.

Captain Bewes turned towards Mr. Samuel, who next spoke from the penumbra at the far end of the table. "I believe, Captain," said he, "that these mendicants are as a rule the most harmless of men?"

"Wouldn't hurt a fly, sir. I have known some whose charity extended to the vermin on their own bodies."

Mrs. Wesley sat tapping the mahogany gently with her finger-tips. "To my thinking, the key of this mystery, if there be one, lies at Surat. My brother had powerful enemies: his letters make that clear. We must inquire into them—their numbers and the particular grudge they bore him—and also into the state of his mind. He was not the sort of person to be kidnapped in open day."

"—By a Thames waterman, for instance, madam?" said Captain Bewes, jocularly, but instantly changed his

tone. "You suggest that he may have disappeared on his own account? To avoid his enemies, you mean?"

"As to his motives, sir, I say nothing: but it certainly looks to me as if he had planned to give you the slip."

"Tut-tut!" exclaimed Matthew. "And left his money behind? Not likely!"

"We have still his boxes to search —"

"Under power of attorney," Sam suggested. "We must see about getting it to-morrow."

"Well, madam," — Captain Bewes knocked out his pipe, drained his glass, and rose,— "the boxes shall be delivered up as soon as you bring me authority: and I trust, for my own sake as well as yours, the contents will clear up this mystery for us. I shall be tied to my ship for the next three days, possibly for another week —"

He was holding out his hand to Mrs. Wesley when the door opened behind him, and Sally appeared.

"If you please," she announced, "there's a gentleman without, wishes to see the company. He calls himself Mr. Wesley."

"It cannot be Charles?" Mrs. Wesley turned towards her son Sam. "But Charles must be at Westminster and in bed these two hours!"

"Surely," said he.

"'Tis not young Master Charles, ma'am, nor any one like him: but a badger-faced old gentleman who snaps up a word before 'tis out of your mouth."

"Show him in," commanded Matthew: and the words

were scarcely out before the visitor stood in the doorway. Mrs. Wesley recognized him at once as the old gentleman who had stood beside her that morning and watched the fight.

"Good evening, ma'am. I learned your address at Westminster: or, to be precise, at the Reverend Samuel Wesley's. You are he, I suppose?"—here he swung round upon Sam—"Your amiable wife told me I should find you here: and so much the better, my visit being on family business. Eh? What? I hope I'm not turning out this gentleman?"—indicating Captain Bewes—"No? Well, if you were leaving, sir, I won't detain you: since, as I say, mine is family business. Mr. Matthew Wesley, I presume?"—with a quick turn towards his host as Captain Bewes slipped away—"And brother of this lady's husband? Quite so. No, I thank you, I do not smoke; but will take snuff, if the company allows. I have heard reports of your skill, sir. My name is Wesley also: Garrett Wesley, of Dangan, County Meath, in Ireland: I sit for my county in Parliament and pass in this world for a respectable person. You'll excuse these details, ma'am; but when a man breaks in upon a family party at this hour of the night, he ought to give some account of himself."

Mrs. Wesley rose from her chair and dropped him a stately curtsey. "The name suffices for us, sir. I make my compliments to one of my husband's family."

"I'm obliged to you, ma'am, and pleased to hear the kinship acknowledged. A good family, as families go, though I say it. We have held on to Dangan since Harry Fifth's time; and to our name since Guy of Welswe was

made a thane by Athelstan. We have a knack, ma'am, of staying the course: small in the build but sound in the wind. It did me good, to-day, to see that son of yours step out for the last round."

"Excuse me —" put in Samuel, pushing a candle aside and craning forward (he was short-sighted) for a better look at the visitor.

"Ha? You have not heard? Well, well — oughtn't to tell tales out of school, and certainly not to the Usher: but your mother and I, sir, had the fortune, this morning, to witness a bout of fisticuffs — Whig against Tory — and perhaps it will not altogether distress you to learn that the Whig took a whipping. I like that boy of yours, ma'am: he has breed. I do not forget" — with another bow — "his mother's descent from the Annesleys of Anglesea and Valentia: but she will forgive me that, while watching him, I thought rather of his blood derived from my own great-great-grandfather Robert, and of our common ancestors — Walter, the king's standard-bearer, William, who carried the heart of the Bruce to Palestine — but I weary Mr. Matthew perhaps?"

"Not at all, sir," the apothecary protested, rubbing a lump of sugar on the rind of a lemon. "You will suffer me to mix you a glass of punch while I listen? I am a practical man, who has been forced to make his own way in the world, and has made it, I thank God. I never found these ancestors of any use to me; but if one of them had time and leisure to carry the heart of the Bruce to Jerusalem I hope I have the leisure to hear about it. Did he return, may I ask?"

"He did not, sir. The Saracens slew him before the Holy Sepulchre, and in fact the undertaking was, as you would regard it, unprofitable. But it gave us the palmer-shells on our coat of arms — argent, a cross sable, in each corner three escallops of the last. I believe, ma'am, the coat differs somewhat in your husband's branch of the family?" He spread a hand on the table so that the candle-light fell on his signet ring.

Mrs. Wesley smiled. "We keep the scallops, sir."

"Scallops!" grunted the apothecary. "Better for you, Susanna, if your husband had ever found the oyster!"

Garrett Wesley glanced at him from under his badger-gray brows. "We may be coming to the oyster, sir, if you have patience. Crest, a wivern proper: motto, 'God is love.' I am thinking, ma'am, a child of yours might find some use for that motto, since children of my own I have none."

"There could be none nobler, sir," Mrs. Wesley answered.

"'Tis his then, ma'am, if you can spare me your son Charles."

The lump of sugar dropped from old Matthew's fingers and splashed into the tumbler, and with that there fell a silence on the room. Samuel half rose from his couch and passed a nervous hand over his thick black hair. His purblind eyes sought his mother's; hers were fastened on this eccentric kinsman, but with a look that passed beyond him. Her lips were parted.

"God is love," she repeated it, soft and low, but with

a thrill at which Garrett Wesley raised his head. "If ever I had distrusted it, that love is manifested here to-night. There was a kinsman, sir, from whom I hoped much for my son; to-day I learn that he is lost — dead, most like — and those hopes with him. He was my brother, and God — who understands mothers, and knows, moreover, how small was ever Samuel Annesley's kindness — must forgive me that I grieved less for him than for Charles's sake. The tale was brought us by the honest man who has just left, and it is scarcely told when another kinsman enters and lays his fortune in Charles's hands. Therefore I thank God for His goodness and" — her voice wavered and she ended with a frank laugh at her own expense — "you, on your part, may read the quality of the gratitude to expect from me. At least I have been honest, sir."

"Ma'am, I have lived long enough to value honesty above gratitude. I make this offer to please myself. The point is, do I understand that you accept?"

"As for that," she answered deliberately — and Sam leaned forward again — "as for that, I am a married woman, and have learnt to submit to my husband's judgment. To be sure I have acquired some skill in guessing at it." She smiled again. "My husband is no ordinary man to jump at this offer. He has three sons, besides his women folk —"

"Whom he neglects," put in Matthew.

"His dearest ambition is to see each of these three an accredited servant of Christ. He desires learning for them, and the priest's habit, and the living God in their

hearts. It will appear strange to you that he should rate these above wealth and a castle in Ireland and a seat in Parliament; but in fact he does. I know him. Think what you will of his ambition, it has this much of sincerity, that he is willing to pinch and starve for it. This, too, I have proved."

"You may add, mother," interposed Sam, "that he would like all these the better with a little success to season them."

"No, I will add that he has perhaps enough respect for me to listen to my entreaties and allow Charles to choose for himself. And this for the moment, sir, is all I can promise, though I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"Tut, woman!" snapped the apothecary. "Close with the offer and don't be a fool. My brother, sir, may be pig-headed — sit down, Susanna!"

"You and I, sir," said Garrett Wesley, "as childless men, are in no position to judge a parent's feelings."

"Children? Let me tell you that I had a son, sir, and he broke my heart. He is in India now, I believe; a middle-aged rake. I give you leave to find and adopt *him*, so long as you don't ask me to see his face again. One was too many for me, and here's a woman with ten children alive — Heaven knows how many she's buried — ten children alive and half-clothed, and herself the youngest of twenty-five!" He broke off and chuckled. "Did you ever hear tell, sir, what old Dr. Martin said after baptizing Susanna here? Some one asked him 'How many children had Dr. Annesley?' 'I forget for

the moment,' said the doctor, 'but 'tis either two dozen or a quarter of a hundred.' And here's a woman, sir, with such a sense of her offspring's importance that she higgles over accepting a fortune for one of 'em!"

"Can you suffer this, ma'am?" Garrett Wesley began; but the apothecary for the moment was neither to hold nor to bind.

"Sam! You have a grain of sense in your head. Don't sit there mum-chance, man! Speak up and tell your mother not to be a fool. You are no child; you know your father, and that, if given one chance in a hundred to act perversely, he'll take it as sure as fate. For heaven's sake persuade your mother to use common caution and keep his finger out of this pie!"

"Nay, sir," answered Sam, "I think she has the right of it, that my father ought to be told; and that the chances are he will leave it to Charles to decide."

Matthew Wesley flung up his hands. "'Tis a conspiracy of folly! Upon my professional word, you ought all to be strait-waistcoated!" He glared around, found speech again, and pounced upon Sam. "A pretty success *you've* made of your father's ambitions — you, with your infatuation for that rogue Atterbury, and your born gift of choosing the cold side of favour! You might have been Freind's successor, Head Master of Westminster School. Where's your chance now? You'll not even get the under mastership, I doubt. Some country grammar school is your fate — I see it; and all for lack of sense. If you lacked learning, lacked piety, lacked —"

"Excuse me, sir, but these are matters I have no mind to discuss with you. When Freind retires Nicoll will succeed him, and Nicoll deserves it. Whether I get Nicoll's place or no, God will decide, who knows if I deserve it. Let it rest in His hands. But when you speak of Bishop Atterbury, and when I think of that great heart breaking in exile, why then, sir, you defeat yourself and steel me against my little destinies by the example of a martyr."

He said it awkwardly, pulling the while at his bony knuckles; but he said it with a passion which cowed his uncle for the moment, and drew from his mother a startled, almost expectant, look. Yet she knew that Sam's eyes could never hold (for her joy and terror) the underlying fire which had shone in her youngest boy's that morning, and which mastered her — strong woman though she was — in her husband's. And this was the tragic note in her love for Sam — the more tragic because never sounded. Sam had learning, diligence, piety, a completely honest mind; he had never caused her an hour's reasonable anxiety; only — to this eldest son she had not transmitted his father's genius, that one divine spark which the Epworth household claimed for its sons as a birthright. An exorbitant, a colossal claim! Yet these Wesleys made it as a matter of course. Did the father know that one of his sons had disappointed it? Sam knew, at any rate; and Sam's mother knew; and each, aware of the other's knowledge, tried pitifully to ignore it.

Matthew Wesley bounced from his chair, unlocked the

glazed doors of a bookcase behind him and pulled forth a small volume.

"Here you have it, sir, '*Maggots: by a Scholar*' — that's my brother. '*Poems on several subjects never before Handled*' — that's the man all over. You may wager that if any man of sense had ever hit on these subjects, my brother had never come within a mile of 'em. Listen: 'The Grunting of a Hog,' 'To my Gingerbread Mistress,' 'A Box like an Egg,' 'Two Soldiers killing one another for a Groat,' 'A Pair of Breeches,' 'A Cow's Tail'—there's titles for you! Cow's tail, indeed! And here, look you, is the author's portrait for a frontispiece, with a laurel-wreath in his hair and a maggot in place of a parting! 'Maggots'! He began with 'em and he'll end with 'em. Maggots!" He slammed the two covers of the book together and tossed it across the table.

Mr. Garrett Wesley, during this tirade, had fallen back upon the attitude of a well-bred man who has dropped in upon a painful family quarrel and cannot well escape. He had taken his hat and stood with his gaze for the most part fastened on the carpet, but lifted now and then when directly challenged by the apothecary's harangue. The contemned volume skimmed across the table and toppled over at his feet. With much gravity he stooped and picked it up; and as he did so, heard Mrs. Wesley addressing him.

"And the curious part of it is," she was saying calmly, "that my brother-in-law means all this in kindness!"

"No, I don't," snapped Matthew; and in the next breath, "well, yes, I do then. Susanna, I beg your pardon,

but you'd provoke a saint." He dropped into his chair. "You know well enough that if I lose my temper, 'tis for your sake and the girls'."

"I know," she said softly, covering his hand with hers. "But you must e'en let us go our feckless way. Sir,"—she looked up—"must this decision be made to-night?"

"Not at all, ma'am, not at all. The lad, if you will, may choose when he comes of age; I have another string to my bow, should he refuse the offer. But meantime, and while 'tis uncertain to which of us he'll end by belonging, I hope I may bear my part in his school fees."

"But that, to some extent, must bind him."

"No; for I propose to keep my share of it dark, with your leave. But you shall hear further of this by letter. May I say, that if I chose his father's son, I have come to-day to set my heart on his mother's? I wish you good-night, ma'am! Good-night, sirs!"

## IV

IN a corner of the Isle of Axeholme, in Lincolnshire, and on the eastern slope of a knoll a few feet above the desolate fenland, six sisters were seated. The eldest, a woman of thirty-three, held a book open in her lap and was reading aloud from it; reading with admirable expression and a voice almost masculine, rich as a deep-mouthed bell. And, while she read, the glory of the verse seemed to pass into her handsome, peevish face.

Her listeners heard her contentedly — all but one, who rested a little lower on the slope, with one knee drawn up, her hands clasped about it, and her brows bent in a frown as she gazed from under her sun-bonnet across the level landscape to the roofs and church-tower of Epworth, five miles away, set on a rise and facing the evening sun. Across the field below, hemmed about and intersected with dykes of sluggish water, two wagons moved slowly, each with a group of labourers about it; for to-night was the end of the oat-harvest, and they were carrying the last sheaves of Wroote glebe. After the carrying would come supper, and the worn-out cart-horse which had brought it afield from the Parsonage stood at the foot of the knoll among the unladen kegs and baskets, patiently whisking his tail to keep off the flies, and serenely indifferent that a lean and lanky youth, seated a few yards

away with a drawing-board on his knee, was attempting his portrait.

The girl frowned as she gazed over this group, over the harvesters, the fens, the dykes, and away toward Epworth: and even her frown became her mightily. Her favourite sister, Molly, seated beside her, and glancing now and again at her face, believed that the whole world contained nothing so beautiful. But this was a fixed belief of Molly's. She was a cripple, and in spite of features made almost angelic by the ineffable touch of goodness, the family as a rule despised her, teased her, sometimes went near to torment her; for the Wesleys, like many other people of iron constitution, had a healthy impatience of deformity and weakness. Hetty alone treated her always gently and made much of her, not as one who would soften a defect, but as seeing none; Hetty of the high spirits, the clear eye, the springing gait; Hetty, the wittiest, cleverest, mirthfullest of them all; Hetty, glorious to look upon.

All the six were handsome. Here they are in their order: Emilia, aged thirty-three (it was she who held the book); Molly, twenty-eight; Hetty, twenty-seven; Nancy twenty-two, lusty, fresh-complexioned, and the least bit stupid; Patty, nearing eighteen, dark-skinned and serious, the one of the Wesleys who could never be persuaded to see a joke; and Kezzy, a lean child of fifteen, who had outgrown her strength. By baptism, Molly was Mary; Hetty, Mehetabel; Nancy, Anne; Patty, Martha; and Kezzy, Kezia. But the register recording most of these names had perished at Epworth in the Parsonage fire, so

let us keep the familiar ones. Grown women and girls, all the six were handsome. They had an air of resting there aloof; with a little fancy you might have taken them, in their plain print frocks, for six goddesses reclining on the knoll and watching the harvesters at work on the plain below — poor drudging mortals and unmannerly:

> "High births and virtue equally they scorn,
> As asses dull, on dunghills born;
> Impervious as the stones their heads are found,
> Their rage and hatred steadfast as the ground."

(The lines were Hetty's.) When the Wesleys descended and walked among these churls, it was as beings of another race; imperious in pride and strength of will. They meant kindly. But the country-folk came of an obstinate stock, fierce to resent what they could not understand. Half a century before, a Dutchman, Cornelius Vermuyden by name, had arrived and drained their country for them; in return they had cursed him, fired his crops, and tried to drown out his settlers and workmen by smashing the dams and laying the land under water. Fierce as they were, these fenmen read in the Wesleys a will to match their own and beat it; a scorn, too, which cowed, but at the same time turned them sullen. Parson Wesley they frankly hated. Thrice they had flooded his crops and twice burnt the roof over his head.

If the six sisters were handsome, Hetty was glorious. Her hair, something browner than auburn, put Emilia's in the shade; her brows, darker even than dark Patty's, were broader and more nobly arched; her transparent

skin, her colour — she defied the sunrays carelessly, and her cheeks drank them in as potable gold clarifying their blood — made Nancy's seem but a dairymaid's complexion. Add that this colouring kept an April freshness; add, too, her mother's height and more than her mother's grace of movement, an outline virginally severe yet flexuous as a palm-willow in April winds; and you have Hetty Wesley at twenty-seven — a queen in a country frock and cobbled shoes; a scholar, a lady, amongst hinds; above all, a woman made for love and growing towards love surely, though repressed and thwarted.

Emilia read:

"So spake our general mother, and, with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unreproved,
And meek surrender, half-embracing leaned
On our first father; half her swelling breast
Naked met his, under the flowing gold
Of her loose tresses hid; he, in delight
Both of her beauty and submissive charms,
Smiled with superior love (as Jupiter
On Juno smiles, when he impregns the clouds
That shed May flowers), and pressed her matron lip
With kisses pure. Aside the Devil turned
For envy, yet with jealous leer malign
Eyed them askance; and to himself thus plained: —
'Sight hateful, sight tormenting!' . . ."

Molly interrupted with a cry; so fiercely Hetty had gripped her wrist of a sudden. Emilia broke off:

"What on earth's the matter, child?"

"Is it an adder?" asked Patty, whose mind was ever practical. "Johnny Whitelamb warned us —"

"An adder?" Hetty answered her, cool in a moment and deliberate. "Nothing like it, my dear: 'tis the old genuine Serpent."

"What do you mean, Hetty? Where is it?"

"Sit down, child, and don't distress yourself. Having rendered everybody profoundly uncomfortable within a circuit of two miles and almost worried itself to a sunstroke, it has now gone into the house to write at a commentary on the Book of Job, to be illustrated with cuts, for one of which — to wit, the war-horse which saith, 'Ha, ha,' among the trumpets — you observe Johnny Whitelamb making a study at this moment."

"I think you must mean papa," said Patty; "and I call it very disrespectful to compare him with Satan; for 'twas Satan sister Emmy was reading about."

"So she was: but if you had read Plutarch every morning with papa, as I have, you would know that the best authors (whom I imitate) sometimes use comparisons for the sake of contrast. Satan, you heard, eyed our first parents askance: papa would have stepped in earlier and forbidden Adam the house. Proceed, Emilia! How goes Milton on? —

"Adam and Eve and Pinch-me
Went to the river to bathe:
Adam and Eve were drown'd,
And who do you think was saved? . . ."

Molly drew her wrist away hurriedly. "Hetty!" she cried, as Emilia withdrew into her book in dudgeon. "Hetty, dear! I cannot bear you to be flippant. It hurts me, it is so unworthy of you."

"Hurts you, my mouse?"—this was one of Hetty's tender, fantastic names for her. "Why then, I ask your pardon and must try to amend. You are right. I *was* flippant; you might even have said vulgar. Proceed, Emilia,—do you hear? I beg your pardon. Tell us more of the Arch-Rebel—

"'And courage never to submit or yield
And what is else not to be overcome . . .'

Say it over in your great voice, Emmy, and purge us poor rebels of vulgarity."

"Pardon me," Emilia answered icily, "I am not conscious of being a rebel—nor of any temptation to be vulgar."

Molly shot an imploring glance at Hetty: but it was too late, and she knew it.

"Hoity-toity! So we are not rebellious—not even Emilia when she thinks of her Leybourne." Emilia bit her lip. "Nor Patty when she thinks of Johnny Romley. And we are never vulgar? Ah, but forgive your poor sister, who goes into service next week! You must allow her to practise the accomplishments which will endear her to the servants' hall, and which Mr. Grantham will pay for and expect. Indeed—since Milton is denied us—I have some lines here; a petition to be handed to mother to-night when she returns. She may not grant it, but she must at least commend her daughter's attempt to catch the tone." And drawing a folded paper from her waistband, she drawled the following, in the broadest Lincolnshire accent:

*"Hetty the Serving-maid's Petition to her Mother.*

"Dear mother, you were once in the ew'n,
As by us cakes is plainly shewn,
Who else had ne'er come arter:
Pray speak a word in time of need,
And with my sour-looked father plead
For your distressèd darter!"

Nancy and Kezzy laughed: the younger at the absurd drawl, which hit off the Wroote dialect to a hair; Nancy indulgently — she was safely betrothed to one John Lambert, an honest land-surveyor, and Mr. Wesley's tyranny towards suitors troubled her no longer. But the others were silent, and a tear dropped on the back of poor Molly's hand.

As Hetty took it penitently, Patty spoke again. "You are wrong, at all events," she persisted, "about papa's being in the house, for I saw him leave it, more than half an hour ago, and walk off on the Bawtry road."

"He has gone to meet mother, then," said Kezzy, "and poor Sander will have to trudge the last two miles."

"Pray Heaven, then, they do not quarrel!" sighed Emilia, shutting the book.

"My dear!" Hetty assured her, "that is past praying for. She will be weary to death, and he, as you know, is in a mood to-day! Though you thought it unfeeling, I rejoiced when he announced he was not riding to Bawtry to meet her but would send Sander instead: for whatever news she brought he would have picked holes in it and wrangled all the way home. But this is his masterpiece: it contrives to get the most annoyance

out of both plans. I often wonder" — here Hetty clasped her knee again, and, leaning back against the turf, let her eyes wander over the darkening landscape — "if our father and mother love each other the better for living together in one perpetual rasp of temper?"

"What is the hour?" asked Emilia.

Hetty glanced at the sun.

"Six, or a few minutes past."

"She cannot be here before half-past seven, and by then the moon will be rising. We will give her a regal harvest-supper, and enthrone her on the last sheaf. I have sent word to have it saved. And there shall be a fire, and baked potatoes."

Kitty clapped her hands.

"And," Hetty took up the tale, "she shall sit by the embers and tell us all her wanderings, like Aeneas, till the break of morning. But before we bid Johnny Whitelamb desist from drawing and build a fire, let us be six princesses here and choose the gifts our mother shall bring home from town."

"You know well enough she has no money to buy gifts," objected Patty.

"Be frugal, then, in wishing, dear Pat. For my part, I demand only a rich Indian uncle: but he must be of solid gold. He should come to us along the Bawtry road in a palanquin with bells jingling at the fringes. Ann, sister Ann, run you to the top of the mound and say if you see such an uncle coming. Moll, dear, 'tis your turn to wish."

"I wish," said Molly, "for a magic mirror." Hetty gave a start, thinking she spoke of a glass which should

hide her deformity. But she went on gravely. "I should call it my Why Mirror, for it would show us why we live as we do, and why mother goes ill-clothed and sometimes hungry. No, I am not grumbling: but sometimes I wish to know — only to know! I think my mirror would tell me something about my brothers, and what they are to do in the world. And I am sure it would tell me that God is ordering this for some great end. But I am weak and impatient, and, if I knew, I could be so much braver!" She ended abruptly, and for a moment or two all the sisters were silent.

"Come, Nancy," said Hetty at length. "Patty will wish for a harp, for certain" — Patty's burning desire to possess one was as notorious in the family as her absolute lack of ear for music — "and Emmy will ask for a new pair of shoes, if she is wise." Emilia tucked a foot out of sight under her skirt.

"But I don't understand this game," put in Kezzy. "A moment ago it was *Blue Beard*, and now it seems to be *Beauty and the Beast*. Which is it?"

"We may need Molly's mirror to tell us," Hetty answered lightly: and with that she glanced up as a shadow darkened the golden sky above the mound, and a voice addressed the sisters all. "Good evening, young ladies!"

# V

A BROAD-SHOULDERED man looked down on them from the summit of the knoll, which he had climbed on its westward side; a tradesman to all appearance, clad in a dusty, ill-fitting suit. So far as they could judge—for he stood with the waning light at his back—he was not ill-featured; but, by his manner of mopping his brow, he was most ungracefully hot, and Molly declared ever afterwards that his thick worsted stockings, seen against the ball of the sun, gave his calves a hideous hairiness. She used to add that he was more than half drunk. His manner of accosting them—half uneasy, half familiar—froze the Wesley sisters.

"Good evening, young ladies! And nice and cool you look, I will say. Can any of you tell me if Parson Wesley's at home?"

"He is not," Emilia answered. "He has gone towards Bawtry."

"Well now, that's what the maid told me at the Parsonage: but I thought, maybe, 'twas a trick—a sort of slip-out-by-the-back and not-at-home to a creditor. I've heard of parsons playing that game, and no harm to their conscience, because no lie told."

"Sir!" Emilia rose and faced him.

"Oh, no offence, miss. I believe *you;* and for that

matter the wench seemed fair-spoken enough, and gave me a drink of cider. 'Tis the matter of a debt, you see." He drew a scrap of dirty paper from his pocket. "Twelve-seventeen-six, for repairs done to Wroote Parsonage; new larder, fifteen; lead for window-casements, eight-six; new fireplace to parlour, one-four-six: ancetera. I'm a plumber by trade—plumber and glazier—and in business at Lincoln. William Wright's my name, and Right by nature." Here he grinned. "Your father would have everything of the best; Epworth tradesman not worth a ——, excuse me, and meaning no offence. So he said, or words to that effect. A very particular gentleman, and his nose at the time into everything. But a man likes to be paid, you understand? So having a job down Owston way, I thought I'd walk over and jog his reverence's memory."

"The money will be paid, sir, in due course, I make no doubt," said Emilia bravely. Some of her sisters were white in the face. Hetty alone seemed to ignore the man's presence, and gazed over the fields towards Epworth.

"Ah, 'in due course'! Let me tell you, miss, that if all the money owing to me was paid, I'd— I'd—" He broke off. "I have ambitions, *I* have: and a head on my shoulders. London's the only place for a man like me. Gad, if *these* were only full"—he slapped his pockets—"there's no saying I wouldn't up and ask one of you to come along o' me! There's that beauty, yonder," he jerked his thumb at Hetty. "She's the pick. My word, and you *are* a beauty, bridling to yourself there,

and thinking dirt of me. Go on, I like you for it: you can't show too much spirit for William Wright." Molly's hand closed over Hetty's two, clasped and lying in her lap: Hetty sat motionless as a statue. "If only your father would trade you off against an honest debt—but you're gentry: I knows the sort. Well, well, 'tis a long tramp back to Owston: so here's wishing you good-night, misses all. If I take back no money, and no pay but a pint of sour cider, I've seen the prettiest picter in all Lincolnshire; so we'll count it a holiday."

He was gone. With the dropping of the sun a chilly shadow had fallen on the mound, and for some moments the sisters remained motionless, agonized, each in her own way distraught.

"The brute!" said Kezzy at length, drawing a long breath.

Hetty rose deliberately. "Child," she said, and her voice was hard, "don't be a goose. The poor creature came for his money. He had the right to insult us."

She shook the dew from her skirt and walked swiftly down the slope.

At the foot of it Johnny Whitelamb had risen and was holding his drawing aslant, in some hope, perhaps, that the angle might correct the perspective of old Mettle's portrait. Certainly it was a villainous portrait, as he acknowledged to himself with a sigh. Parts of it must be rubbed out, and his right hand rummaged in his pocket and found a crust. But Johnny, among other afflictions, suffered from an unconscionable appetite. While he doubted where to begin, his teeth met in the bread, and

he started guiltily, for it was more than half eaten when Hetty swooped down on him.

"Quick, Johnny! run you to the woodstack while I unpack the baskets. Mother will be arriving in an hour, and we are to give her supper out here, with baked potatoes. Run, that's a good soul: and on your way get Jane to give you a tin of oatmeal — tell her I must have it if she has to scrape the bottom of the bin; *and* a gridiron, *and* a rolling-pin. We will have griddle-cakes. Run — and whatever you do, don't forget the rolling-pin!"

Johnny ran with long ungainly strides, his coat-tails flapping like a scarecrow's. The coat, in fact, was a cast-off one of Mr. Wesley's, narrow in the chest, short in the sleeves, but inordinately full in the skirts. The Rector had found and taken Johnny from the Charity School at Wroote to help him with the maps and drawings for his great work, the "Dissertationes in Librum Jobi," and in return the lad found board and lodging and picked up what scraps he could of Greek and Latin. He wrote a neat hand and transcribed carefully; his drawings were atrocious, and he never attempted a woodcut without gashing himself. But he kept a humble heart, and for all the family a devotion almost canine. To him the Rector, with his shovel-hat and stores of scholarship, was a god-like man; with his air, too, of apostolical authority — for Johnny, whom all Epworth set down as good for nothing, reflected the Wesley notions of the Church's majesty. In his dreams — but only in his dreams — he saw himself such a man, an Oxford scholar, treading that beatific city of which the Rector disclosed a glimpse at times; his

brows bathed by her ineffable aura, and he — he, Johnny Whitelamb — baptized into her mysteries, a participant with the Rector's second son John, now at Christ Church — of whom (he noted) the family spoke but seldom and with a constraint which hinted at hopes too dear to be other than fearful. Meanwhile he did his poor tasks, stayed his stomach when he could, and rewarded his employers with love.

He loved them all: but Hetty he worshipped.

He knew his place. For an hour past he had been sitting, as became a servant, beyond earshot of the sisters' talk, yet within call, should they summon him. Now the goddess had descended from her mountain with a command, and he ran towards the woodstack as he would have run and plunged into the water-dyke, had she bidden him.

He returned to find her waiting with her sleeves tucked above her elbows.

"Oh, Johnny — I forgot the tinder-box!" she cried.

He dropped his burdens and produced it triumphantly from his tail pocket.

"I thought of that!"

"But you must not!" — as he dropped on his knees and began to unbind and break up the sticks. "This is my business. I am going into service, in ten days — at Kelstein: and you must watch and tell me what I do amiss."

She pulled the faggot towards her, broke up the sticks, and built the fragments daintily into a heap, with a handful of dry leaves as basis. The twilight deepened

around them as she built. Next she struck flint on steel, caught the spark on tinder, and blew. Johnny watched the glow on her cheeks wakening and fading, and, watching, fell into a brown study.

"There!" she exclaimed, straightening herself upon her knees as the blaze caught. "Is that a good omen for Kelstein?"

Her eyes were on the sticks, and in their crackling she did not listen for his answer, but commanded him to take a pitcher of water and pour, while she mixed and kneaded the meal. To the making of bread, cakes, pastry, Hetty brought a born gift; a hand so light, quick, and cool, that Johnny could have groaned for his own fumbling fingers. A dozen cakes were finished and banked in the wood-ashes as the fire died down to a steadily glowing mass. By this time the landscape about them lay flat to the eye and gray, touched with the faint gold of moonrise, and just then Emilia called down from the mound that the travellers were in sight on the Bawtry road.

The others ran to meet them: but Hetty remained by her task, silent, and Johnny silent beside her. Together they spread the two meals, one beside the fire for the family, the other some fifty yards off for the harvesters, now moving towards the rick-yard with the last load.

Hetty was not her mother's favourite. Emilia and Patty divided that honour by consent, though the balance appeared now and then to incline towards Patty. But between Mrs. Wesley and her fairest daughter there rested always a shadow of restraint, curious enough in its origin, which was that they knew each other better

than the rest. Often and quite casually Hetty would guess some thought in her mother's mind hidden from her sisters. She made no parade of this insight, set up no claim upon it; merely gave proof of it in passing, and fell back on her attitude of guarded affection. And Mrs. Wesley seemed to draw back uneasily from these reflections of herself, and take refuge in Patty, who, of all her children, understood her the least.

So now when the others brought their mother to the feast in triumph, Hetty swept her a curtsey with skirt held wide, then went straight and kissed her on both cheeks.

"Ah, what a dear truant 'tis! and how good 'tis to have her home again!"

She did not ask (as Nancy or Patty would assuredly have asked) what had become of her father. She noted, even in the half-light, a flush on her mother's temples, and guessed at once that there had been a duel of tempers on the road, and that, likely enough, papa had bounced into the house in a huff. The others had, in fact, witnessed this exit. Hetty, who divined it, went the swiftest way to efface the memory. She alone, on occasion, could treat her mother playfully, as an equal in years; and she did so now, taking her by the hand, and conducting her with mock solemnity to the seat of honour.

"It *is* good to be home," Mrs. Wesley admitted as they seated her, dusted her worn shoes, and plied her with milk and hot griddle-cakes, potatoes slit and sprinkled with salt upon appetizing lumps of butter.

She forgot her vexation. Even the Wroote labourers seemed less surly than usual. One or two, as they gathered, stepped forward to welcome her and wish her health before ranging themselves at their separate meal: and soon a pleasant murmur of voices went up from either group at supper in the broad meadow under the moon.

"But where have you left uncle Annesley?" asked Kezzy. "And are we all to be rich and live in comfort at last?"

Mrs. Wesley shook her head. "He was not on board the *Albemarle*." She told of her visit to the ship and the captain's story; adding that their uncle's boxes, when handed over and examined, contained no papers at all, no will, no bonds, not so much as a scrap to throw light on the mystery. And as they sat silent in dismay, she went on to tell of Garrett Wesley and the fortune unexpectedly laid at Charles's feet.

Emilia was the first to find speech. "So," she commented bitterly, "yet another of our brothers is in luck's way. Always our brothers! Westminster and Oxford for them, and afterwards, it seems, a fortune: while we sit at home in rags, or drudge and eat the bread of service. Oh, why, mother? You and we suffer together—do you believe it can be God's will?"

Hetty drew a long breath. "Perhaps," she said drearily, "Charles will clothe us when he gets this money. Perhaps he will even find us wooers in place of those to whom papa has shown the door."

"I am not sure your father will allow Charles to

accept," said Mrs. Wesley gently; "though I may persuade him to let the lad decide for himself when he comes of age. Until then the offer stands open."

"I sometimes wonder," Emilia mused, "if our father be not staring mad."

"Hush, child: that is neither for you to say nor for me to hear. You know it has been almost a vow with him to dedicate your three brothers to God's service."

"Charles might inherit Dangan Castle and serve God too. There is no law that an Irish squire must spend all his time cockfighting."

"These vows!" murmured Hetty, flinging herself back in her favourite attitude and nursing her knee. "If folks will not obey Christ's command and swear not at all, they might at least choose a vow which only hurts themselves. Now, papa"—Hetty shot a glance at her mother, who felt it, even in the dusk, and bent her eyes on the smouldering fire. The girl had heard (for it was kitchen gossip) that Mr. Wesley had once quarrelled with his wife over politics, and left Epworth rectory vowing never to return to her until she acknowledged William III. for her rightful king; nor indeed had returned until William's death made the vow idle and released him. "Now, papa"—after a pause—"has an unfortunate habit, like Jephthah, of swearing to another's hurt. For instance, since Sukey married Dick Ellison, he seems to have vowed that none of us shall have a lover; and so, dear mother, you might have found us just now, like six daughters of Jephthah, bewailing our fates upon a hill."

"He has no fault to find with my John Lambert," put in Nancy.

Hetty did not heed. "I have no patience with these swearers. A man, or a woman for that matter, should have the courage to outbrave an oath when it hurts the innocent. Did God require the blood of Jephthah's daughter? or of the sons of Rizpah? Think, mother, if this fire were lit in the fields here, and you sitting by it to scare the beasts from your three sons! I cannot like that David. Saul, now, was a man and a king, every inch of him, even in his dark hours. David had no breeding — a pretty, florid man, with his curls and pink cheeks; one moment dancing and singing, and the next weeping on his bed. Some women like that kind of man: but his complexion wears off. In the end he grows nasty, and from the first he is disgustingly underbred."

"Hetty!"

"I cannot help it, mother. Had I been Michal, and Saul's daughter, and had seen that man capering before the ark, I should have scorned him as she did."

And Hetty stood up and strode away into the darkness.

In the darkness, almost an hour later, Molly found her by the edge of a dyke. She had a handkerchief twisted between her fingers, and kept wringing it as she paced to and fro. Why had she given way to passion? Why, on this night of all nights, had she saddened her mother? And why by an outburst against David, of all people in the world?

She could not tell. When the temper is overcharged

it overflows, nine times out of ten, into a channel absurdly irrelevant.

What on earth had David to do with it? She halted and laughed while Molly entreated her. In the dyke the black water crawled at her feet, and upon it a star shone.

"Star Mary—*stella maris*, if only you will shine steadily and guide me! Kiss me now, and hear that I am sorry."

But it was Molly who, later that night, put out both arms in the bed where they slept together: and with a wail which lasted until Hetty's enfolded her and held her close.

"I was dreaming," she muttered. "I dreamt—of that man."

## VI

FOR six months of the year, sometimes for longer, the thatched parsonage at Wroote rose out of a world of waters, forlorn as a cornstack in a flood, and the Rector of Epworth journeyed between his two parishes by boat, often in soaked breeches, and sometimes with a napkin tied over his hat and wig. But in this harvest weather, while the sun shone and the meadow-breezes overcame the odours of damp walls and woodwork of the pig-sty at the back and of rotting weed beyond, the Wesley household lived cheerfully enough, albeit pinched for room; more cheerfully than at Epworth, where the more spacious rectory, rebuilt by Mr. Wesley at a cost of £400, remained half-furnished after fourteen years — a perpetual reminder of debt.

Here at any rate, although Wroote tithe brought in a bare £50 a year, they could manage to live and pay their way, and feel meanwhile that they were lessening the burden. For Dick Ellison, Sukey's husband, had undertaken to finance Epworth tithe, and was renting the rectory for a while with the purpose of bringing his father-in-law's affairs to order — a filial offer which Mr. Wesley perforce accepted while hating Dick from the

bottom of his heart, and the deeper because of this necessity.

Dick was his "wen," "more unpleasant to him than all his physic"—a red-faced, uneducated squireen, with money in his pockets (as yet), a swaggering manner due to want of sense rather than deliberate offensiveness, and a loud patronizing laugh which drove the Rector mad. Comedy presided over their encounter; but such comedy as only the ill-natured can enjoy. And the Rector, splenetic, exacting, jealous of authority, after writhing for a time under Dick's candid treatment of him as a child, usually cut short the scene by bouncing off to his library and slamming the door behind him.

Even Mrs. Wesley detested her son-in-law, and called him "a coarse, vulgar, immoral man"; but confessed (in his absence) that they were all the better off for his help. Ease from debt she had never known; but here at Wroote the clouds seemed to be breaking. Duns had been fewer of late. With her poultry-yard and small dairy she was earning a few pounds, and this gave her a sense of helpfulness she had not known at Epworth: a pound saved may be a pound gained, but a pound earned can be held in the hand, and the touch makes a wonderful difference. The girls had flung themselves heartily into the farm-work: they talked of it, at night, around the kitchen hearth (for of the two sitting-rooms one had been given up to their father for his library, and the other Hetty vowed to be "too grand for the likes of dairy-women." Also the marsh-vapours in the Isle of Axholme can be agueish after sunset, even in summer, and they found the

fire a comfort). Hetty had described these rural economies in a long letter to Samuel at Westminster, and been answered by an "Heroick Poem," pleasantly facetious:

"The spacious glebe around the house
Affords full pasture to the cows,
Whence largely milky nectar flows,
  O sweet and cleanly dairy!
Unless or Moll, or Anne, or you,
Your duty should neglect to do,
And then 'ware haunches black and blue
  By pinching of a fairy,"

— with much in the same easy vein about "sows and pigs and porkets," and the sisters' housewifely duties:

"Or lusty Anne, or feeble Moll,
  Sage Pat or sober Hetty."

And the sisters were amused by the lines and committed them to heart.

They had learnt of the pleasures of life mainly through books, and now their simple enjoyment was, as it were, more real to them because it could be translated into verse. In circumstances, then, they were happier than they had been for many years: nor was poverty the real reason for Hetty's going into service at Kelstein; since Emilia had been fetched home from Lincoln (where for five years she had heen earning her livelihood as teacher in a boarding-school) expressly to enjoy the family's easier fortune, and with a promise of pleasant company to be met in Bawtry, Doncaster, and the country around Wroote.

This promise had not been fulfilled, and Emilia's temper

had soured in consequence. Nor had the Rector's debts melted at the rate expected. The weight of them still oppressed him and all the household: but Mrs. Wesley knew in her heart that, were poverty the only reason, Hetty need not go. Hetty knew it, too, and rebelled. She was happy at Wroote; happier at least than she would be at Kelstein. She did not wish to be selfish: she would go, if one of the sisters must. But why need any of them go?

She asked her mother this, and Mrs. Wesley fenced with the question while hardening her heart. In truth she feared what might happen if Hetty stayed. They had made some new acquaintances at Wroote and at Bawtry there was a lover, a young lawyer . . . a personable young man, reputed to be clever in his profession. . . . Mrs. Wesley knew nothing to his discredit . . . and sure, Hetty's face might attract any lover. So her thoughts ran, without blaming the girl, whose heart she believed to be engaged, though she could not tell how deeply. But the Rector must be considered, and he had taken an instant and almost frantic dislike for the youth. There was nothing unusual in this: for, like many another uxorious man (with all his faults of temper he was uxorious), Mr. Wesley hated that any one should offer love to his daughters. This antipathy of his had been a nuisance for ten years past; since the girls were, when all was said, honest healthy girls with an instinct for mating, and not to be blamed for making their best of the suitors which Epworth and its neighbourhood provided. But since Sukey's marriage it had deepened

into something like a mania, and now, in Hetty's case, flared up with a passion incomprehensible if not quite insane. He declared his hatred of lawyers — and certainly he had suffered at their hands: he forbade the young man to visit the house, to correspond with Hetty, even to see her.

Mrs. Wesley watched her daughter and was troubled. The Rector's veto had been effective enough once or twice with Hetty's sisters. Emilia, on a visit with her uncle Matthew in London, had fallen passionately in love with a young Oxonian named Leybourne. But Sam's wife had discovered something to his discredit and had spoken to Sam, and Sam to the Rector. The match was broken off, and Emilia renounced her love, though she never forgave the mischief-maker. Patty again had formed an attachment for John Romley, who had been a pupil of Sam's, had afterwards graduated at Lincoln College, Oxford, and was now the ambitious young master of the Free School at Epworth. Again the Rector interfered, and Patty sighed and renounced her romance. Would Hetty, too, renounce and acquiesce? Mrs. Wesley doubted: nay, was even afraid. Hetty alone had never been overawed by her father, had never acknowledged the *patria potestas* with all its exorbitant claims. She had never actually revolted, but she defied, somehow, the spell he had cast upon the others: and somehow — here was the marvel — Mrs. Wesley, who more than any other of the family had yielded to the illusion and fostered it, understood Hetty the better for her independence. The others, under

various kinds of pressure, had submitted: but here was the very woman she might have been, but for her own submission! And she feared for that woman. Hetty must leave Wroote, or there was no knowing how it might end.

"Mother, I believe you are afraid of what I may do."

Mrs. Wesley, incapable of a lie or anything resembling it, bent her head. "I have been afraid, once or twice," she said.

"So you send me away? That seems to me neither very brave nor very wise. Will there be less danger at Kelstein?"

Her mother started. "Does *he* know of your going? You don't tell me he means to visit you there?"

"Forgive me, dearest mother, but your first question is a little foolish — eh?" Hetty laughed and quoted:

> "But if she whom Love doth honour
> Be conceal'd from the day —
> Set a thousand guards upon her,
> Love will find out the way."

She put up her chin defiantly.

"I wish, child, you would tell me if — if this is much to you," said Mrs. Wesley wistfully, with a sudden craving to put her arms around her daughter and have her confidence.

Hetty hesitated for a fatal moment, then laughed again. "I am not a child precisely; and we read one another, dear, much better than we allow. Your second question you have no right to ask. You are sending me away —"

"No right, Hetty?"

"You are sending me away," Hetty repeated, and seemed to be considering. After a pause she added slowly: "You others are all under papa's thumb, and you make me a coward. But I will promise you this"—here her words began to drag—"and to strengthen me no less than to ease your fears, I promise it, mother. If the worst come to the worst, it shall not be at Kelstein that I choose it, but here among you all. I think you will gain little by sending me to Kelstein, mother: but you need not be afraid for me there."

"You speak in enigmas."

"And my tone, you would say, is something too theatrical for your taste? Well, well, dear mother, 'tis the privilege of a house with a doom upon it to talk tragedy: for, you know, Molly declares we have a doom upon us, though we cannot agree what 'tis. I uphold it to be debt, or papa's tantrums, or perhaps Old Jeffrey;[1] but she will have it to be something deeper, and that one day we shall awake and see that it includes all three."

"It appears to be my doom," said Mrs. Wesley, her face relaxing, "to listen to a deal of nonsense from my daughters."

"And who's to blame, dear? You chose to marry at twenty, and here you have a daughter unmarried at seven and twenty. Now I respect and love you, as you well know: but every now and then reason steps in and proves to me that I am seven years your senior—which is absurd, and the absurder for the grave wise face you

[1] The Wesley Ghost.

put upon it. So come along, sweet-and-twenty, and help me pack my buskins." Hetty led the way upstairs humming an air which (though her mother did not recognize it) was Purcell's setting of a song in "Twelfth Night":

"Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know."

## VII

ON the day fixed, and at nine in the morning, Dick Ellison, who had promised to drive Hetty over to Kelstein, arrived with his gig. Sukey accompanied him, to join in the farewells and spend a few hours at the parsonage pending his return.

Now these visits of Sukey's were a trial to her no less than to her mother and sisters. She knew that they detested her husband, and (what was worse) she had enough of the Wesley in her to perceive why and how: nevertheless, being a Wesley, she kept a steady face on her pain. Stung at times to echo Dick's sentiments and opinions, as it were in self-defence, she tried to soften them down and present them in a form at least tolerable to her family. It was heroic, but uncomfortable; and they set aside the best parlour for it.

Sukey would have preferred the kitchen. In person she was short and plump, and her face expressed a desire to be cheerful. She had little or none of that grace by which her sisters walked in the commonest cotton frocks as queens. In childhood she had been noted for her *déshabille*, and now obediently flaunted her husband's taste in bonnets.

Her headdress to-day had a dreadful coquettishness. Dick had found it at Lincoln and called on the company

to admire. It consisted of three large mock water-lilies on a little mat of muslin, and was perched on her piled hair so high aloft that their gaze, as they scanned it, seemed to pass far over her head. She longed to tear it down, cast it on the floor, and be the Sukey they knew.

The plate of cake and biscuits on the table gave the parlour a last funereal touch. Dick was boisterously talkative. The others scarcely spoke. At length Hetty, who had been struggling to swallow a biscuit, and well-nigh choking over it, rose abruptly, kissed her mother, and went straight to her father's room.

He sat at his writing-table, busy as usual with his commentary upon the Book of Job. At another table by the window Johnny Whitelamb bent over a map, with his back to the light. He glanced up as she entered: she could not well read his eyes for the shadow, and perhaps for some dimness in her own: but he rose, gathered his papers together, and slipped from the room.

"Papa, Dick Ellison is in the parlour."

"So my ears inform me."

"He wishes to see you."

"Then you may take him my compliments and assure him that he will not."

"But, papa, the gig is at the door. I have come to say good-by."

"Ah, in that case I will step out to the door and see you off; but I will not be button-holed by Dick Ellison." He rose and stood eying her, pinching his chin between

thumb and forefinger. "You have something to say to me, I suspect."

"I am going to Kelstein," Hetty began firmly. "I would like to obey you there, sir, as the others do at home. I do not mean outwardly: but to feel, while I am absent, that I am earning —" She paused and cast about for a word.

"You will be earning, of course. There is always satisfaction in that."

"I am not thinking of money."

"Of my approval, then? Your employer, Mr. Grantham, is an honest gentleman: I shall trust his report of you."

"Papa, I came to beg you for more than that. Will you not let me feel that I am earning something more? — that if, as time goes on, my conduct pleases you, you will be more disposed to consider — to grant me —"

"Mehetabel!"

"I love him, papa! I cannot help it. Sir —!"

She put out both hands to him, her eyes welling. But he had turned sharply away from her cry, and strode across the room in his irritation. Her hands fell, and one caught at the edge of the table for support while she leaned, bowing her head.

He came abruptly back. "Are you aware, Mehetabel, that you have proposed a bargain to me? I do not bargain with my children: I expect obedience. Nor as a father am I obliged to give my reasons. But since you are leaving us, and I would not dismiss you harshly, let me say that I have studied this man for whom you

avow a fondness; and apart from his calling — which I detest — I find him vain, foppish, insincere. He has *lĕvitas* with *lēvitas:* I believe his heart to be as shallow as his head. I know him to be no fit mate for one of my daughters; least of all for you who have gifts above your sisters — gifts which I have recognized and tried to improve. Child, summon your pride to you, and let it help your obedience." He broke off and gazed out of window. "If," said he more softly, "our fate be not offered to us, we must make it. If, while our true fate delays, there come to us unworthy phantoms simulating it, we should test them; lest impatient we run to embrace vanity, and betray, not our hopes alone, but the purpose God had in mind for us from the beginning."

Hetty looked up. She might have thought that she was twenty-seven, and asked herself how long was it likely to be before a prince came across those dreary fields to the thatched parsonage, seeking her. But her heart was full of the man she loved, and she thought only that her father did him bitter injustice.

She shivered and lifted her face. "Good-by, papa," she said coldly.

He kissed her on the cheek, and took a step to follow her to the door; but thought better of it and returned to the window. He heard the door close upon her, and five minutes later saw her whisked away in the gig by Dick Ellison's side.

# VIII

HE continued to stare out of window long after the gig had disappeared over the low horizon: a small, nervous, indomitable figure of a man close upon his sixty-second birthday, standing for a while with his back turned upon his unwieldy manuscripts and his jaw thrust forward obstinately as he surveyed the blank landscape. He had the scholar's stoop, but this thrust of the jaw was habitual and lifted his face at an angle which gave an "up-sighted" expression to his small eyes, set somewhat closely together above a long straight nose. Nose and eyes announced obstinacy, and the eyes, quick and fiery, warned you that it was of the aggressive kind which not only holds to its purpose, but never ceases nagging until it be attained. In build he was lean and wiry: in carriage amazingly dignified for one who (to be precise) stood but 5 feet 5½ inches high.

His father had been a non-juring clergyman, one of the many ejected from their livings on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662; and he himself had been educated as a Nonconformist at Mr. Morton's famous academy on Newington Green, where Daniel Defoe had preceded him as a pupil, and where he had heard John Bunyan preach. At the conclusion of his training there he was pitched on to answer some pamphlets levelled against the Dissenters,

and this set him on a course of reading which produced an effect he was far from intending: for instead of writing the answer he determined to renounce Dissent and attach himself to the Established Church. He dwelt at that time with his mother and an old aunt, themselves ardent Dissenters, to whom he could not tell his design. So he arose before daybreak one morning, tramped sixty miles to Oxford, and entered himself at Exeter College as a poor scholar. This was in August, 1683.

He took up his residence in Oxford with forty-five shillings in his pocket. He studied there five years, and during that time received from his family and friends just five shillings; obtained his Bachelor's degree, and departed seven pounds and fifteen shillings richer than when he entered the University. The winter of 1683 was a hard beginning for a scholar too poor to buy fuel, the cold being so severe in the Thames valley that coaches plied as freely on the river from the Temple to Westminster as if they had gone upon the land. Yet "I tarried," he afterwards wrote, "in Exeter College, though I met with some hardships I had before been unacquainted with, till I was of standing sufficient to take my Bachelor's degree; and not being able to subsist there afterwards, I came to London during the time of my Lord Bishop of London's suspension by the High Commission, and was instituted into deacon's orders by my Lord Bishop of Rochester, at his palace at Bromley, August 7th, 1688."

He had maintained himself by instructing wealthier undergraduates and writing their exercises for them (as a servitor he had to black their boots and run their

errands); also by scribbling for John Dunton, the famous London bookseller, whose acquaintance he had made during his last year at Mr. Morton's. With all this he found time and the will to be charitable, and had visited the poor creatures imprisoned in the Castle at Oxford — many for debt. He lived to take the measure of this kindness, and to see it repeated by his sons.

"Maggots: or Poems on Several Subjects never before Handled" was no very marketable book of rhymes. Yet it served its purpose and helped him, through Dunton, to become acquainted with a few men of letters and learning. He had something better, too, to cheer his start in London. Dunton in 1682 had married Elizabeth, one of the many daughters of Dr. Samuel Annesley, the famous Dissenter, then preaching at a Nonconformist church which he had opened in Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate. Young Wesley, a student at Newington Green, had been present at the wedding, with a copy of verses in his pocket: and there, in a corner of the Doctor's gloomy house in Spital Yard, he came on the Doctor's youngest daughter, a slight girl of fourteen, seated and watching the guests.

She was but a child, and just then an unhappy one, though with no childish trouble. Minds ripened early in Annesley House, where scholars and divines resorted to discuss the battle raging between Church and Dissent. Susanna Annesley had listened and brooded upon what she heard; and now her convictions troubled her, for she saw, or thought she saw, the Church to be in the right, and herself an alien in her father's house, secretly re-

bellious against those she loved and preparing to disappoint them cruelly. She knew her father's beliefs to be as strong and deep as they were temperately expressed.

So it happened that Samuel Wesley, halting awkwardly (as a hobbledehoy will) before this slip of a girl and stammering some words meant to comfort her for losing her sister, presently found himself answering strange questions, staring into young eyes which had somehow surprised his own doubts of Dissent, and beyond them into a mind which had come to its own decision and quietly, firmly, invited him to follow. It startled him so that love dawned at the same moment with a lesser shock. He seated himself on the window cushion beside her, and after this they talked a very little, but watched the guests, feeling like two conspirators in the crowd, feeling also that the world was suddenly changed for them both.

And thus it came about that Samuel Wesley dropped his pen, packed his books, and tramped off to Oxford. He was back again now, after five years, with his degree, but no money as yet to marry on. He started with a curacy at £28 a year; was appointed chaplain on board a man-of-war, when his income rose to £70; and began an epic poem on the Life of Christ, scribbling (since he had leisure) at the rate of two hundred couplets a day; but soon returned to London, where he obtained a second curacy and £30 a year. His pen earned him another £30, and on this he decided to marry.

Between him and Susanna Annesley there had been little talk of love, but no doubt at all. She was now close

upon twenty, and ready to marry him when he named the day. So married they were in 1689. Less than a year later their first child, Samuel, was born in their London lodgings, and soon after came an offer from the Marquis of Normanby of the living of South Ormsby in Lincolnshire. To South Ormsby accordingly they journeyed on Midsummer Day, 1690, and there resided until the spring of 1697 in a vicarage little better than a mud-built hut. There Mrs. Wesley bare Emilia, Susannah, and Molly, besides other children who died in infancy, and there the Rector put forth his "Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A heroic poem in ten books," besides such trifles as "The Young Student's Library: containing Extracts and Abridgments of the most Valuable Books printed in England and in the Foreign Journals from the year '65 to this time. To which is added A New Essay upon all sorts of Learning."

Close by the parish church stood the Hall, the great house of the Lord Marquis of Normanby who in 1694 made Mr. Wesley his domestic chaplain. The Marquis was a rake, and he and his mistresses gave the poor clergyman many searchings of heart. There was one who took a fancy to Mrs. Wesley and would be intimate with her. Coming home one day and finding this visitor seated with his wife, Mr. Wesley went up to her, took her by the hand and very fairly handed her out. It cost him his living: but the Marquis, being what is called a good fellow in the main, bore him no grudge; nay, rather liked his spirit, and afterwards showed himself a good friend to the amount of twenty guineas, to

which the Marchioness (but this is more explicable) added five from her own purse.

By good fortune the living of Epworth fell vacant just then, and in accordance with some wish or promise of the late Queen Mary, to whom he had dedicated his "Life of Christ," Mr. Wesley was presented to it, a decent preferment, worth about £200 a year in the currency of those times. But by this time his family was large; he was in debt; the fees to be paid before taking up the living ate further into his credit; a larger house had to be maintained, with three acres of garden and farm-buildings; and his new parishioners hated his politics and made life as miserable for him as they could. They were savage fighters, but they found their match. In 1702 they set fire secretly to the parsonage-house, and burned down two-thirds of it. In the winter of 1704 they destroyed a great part of his crop of flax. This was the year of Blenheim, and upon news of the victory Mr. Wesley sat down to commemorate it in heroic verse. The poem (published in the early days of 1705), if inferior to Mr. Addison's on the same occasion, ran to five hundred and ninety-four lines, and contained compliments enough to please the great Duke of Marlborough, who sent for its author, rewarded him with the chaplaincy of Colonel Lepelle's regiment, and promised him a prebend's stall. The Dissenters, who (with some excuse, perhaps) looked upon Mr. Wesley as that worst of foes, a deserter from their own ranks, using their influence in Parliament and at Court, had him deprived of his regiment and denied the

stall. In April Queen Anne dissolved Parliament, and in May the late Tory members for the county of Lincoln, Sir John Thorold and the Dymoke who then held—as his descendant holds to-day—the dignity of Royal Champion, fought and lost an election with the Whig candidates, Colonel Whichcott and Mr. Albert Bertie. The Dissenters of course supported these; and Mr. Wesley, scorning insults and worse, the unpopular side: with what results we may read in these extracts from letters to the Archbishop of York.

"Epworth, June 7th, 1705.

"I went to Lincoln on Tuesday night, May 29th, and the election began on Wednesday, 30th. A great part of the night our Isle people kept drumming, shouting, and firing of pistols and guns under the window where my wife lay, who had been brought to bed not three weeks. I had put the child to nurse over against my own house; the noise kept his nurse waking till one or two in the morning. Then they left off, and the nurse being heavy with sleep, overlaid the child. She waked, and finding it dead, ran over with it to my house almost distracted, and calling my servants, threw it into their arms. They, as wise as she, ran up with it to my wife, and, before she was well awake, threw it cold and dead into hers. She composed herself as well as she could, and that day got it buried.

"A clergyman met me in the castle yard and told me to withdraw, for the Isle men intended me a mischief. Another told me he had heard near twenty of them say, 'if they got me in the castle yard, they would squeeze my guts out.' My servant had the same advice. I went by Gainsbro', and God preserved me.

"When they knew I was got home, they sent the drum and mob, with guns, etc., as usual, to compliment me till after midnight. One of them, passing by on Friday evening and seeing my children in the yard, cried out, 'O ye devils! We will come and turn ye all

out of doors a-begging shortly.' God convert them, and forgive them!

"All this, thank God, does not in the least sink my wife's spirits. For my own, I feel them disturbed and disordered. . . ."

The rebuilding of the parsonage and some unhappy essays in farming his glebe had run the Rector still farther in debt: and now, not satisfied with winning the election, his enemies struck at him privily. His next letter is dated not three weeks later from the debtor's ward in Lincoln.

"Lincoln Castle, June 25th, 1705.

"My Lord,—Now I am at rest, for I am come to the haven where I have long expected to be. On Friday last (June 23rd), when I had been, in christening a child, at Epworth, I was arrested in my churchyard by one who had been my servant, and gathered my tithe last year, at the suit of one of Mr. Whichcott's relations and zealous friends (Mr. Pinder) according to their promise when they were in the Isle before the election. The sum was not thirty pounds, but it was as good as five hundred. Now they knew the burning of my flax, my London journey, and their throwing me out of my regiment had both sunk my credit and exhausted my money. My adversary was sent to when I was on the road, to meet me, that I might make some proposals to him. But all his answer was that 'I must immediately pay the whole sum, or go to prison.' Thither I went, with no great concern to myself: and find much more civility and satisfaction here than *in brevibus gayris* of my own Epworth. I thank God, my wife was pretty well recovered and churched some days before I was taken from her; and hope she'll be able to look to my family, if they don't turn them out of doors as they have often threatened to do. One of my biggest concerns was my being forced to leave my poor lambs in the midst of so many wolves. But the great Shepherd is able to provide for them and to preserve them. My wife bears it with that courage which becomes her, and which I expected from her.

"I don't despair of doing some good here (and so I sha'n't quite lose the end of living), and it may be, do more in this new parish than in my old one: for I have leave to read prayers every morning and afternoon here in the prison, and to preach once a Sunday, which I choose to do in the afternoon when there is no sermon at the minster. And I'm getting acquainted with my brother jail-birds as fast as I can; and shall write to London next post, to the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge, who, I hope, will send me some books to distribute among them. . . ."

The next letter, dated from prison on September 12th, proves that he had reasons only too good to be fearful.

"The other matter is concerning the stabbing of my cows in the night since I came hither, but a few weeks ago; and endeavouring thereby to starve my forlorn family in my absence; my cows being all dried by it, which was their chief subsistence; though I hope they had not the power to kill any of them outright. . . .

"The same night the iron latch of my door was twined off, and the wood hacked in order to shoot back the lock, which nobody will think was with an intention to rob my family. My house-dog, who made a huge noise within doors, was sufficiently punished for his want of politics and *moderation*, for the next day but one his leg was almost chopped off by an unknown hand. 'Tis not every one could bear these things; but, I bless God, my wife is less concerned with suffering them than I am in the writing, or than I believe your Grace will be in reading them. . . . Oh, my lord! I once more repeat it, that I shall some time have a more equal Judge than any in this world.

"Most of my friends advise me to leave Epworth, if e'er I should get from hence. I confess I am not of that mind, because I may yet do good there; and 'tis like a coward to desert my post because the enemy fire thick upon me. They have only wounded me yet, and, I believe, *can't* kill me. I hope to be home by Xmass. God help my poor family! . . ."

By the end of the year (the Archbishop and other friends assisting) a good part of his debts had been paid and Mr. Wesley was at home again. From Epworth he refused to budge; and there, for three years and more, the rage of his enemies slumbered and his affairs grew easier. John (if we do not count the poor infant overlaid) had been the last child born before his imprisonment. Now arrived Patty, in the autumn of 1706, and Charles, in December, 1707. A third was expected, and shortly, when in the night of February 9th, 1709, the parsonage took fire again and burned to the ground in fifteen minutes.

"On Wednesday last, at half an hour after eleven at night, in a quarter of an hour's time or less, my house at Epworth was burned down to the ground—I hope by accident; but God knows all. We had been brewing, but had done all; every spark of fire quenched before five o'clock that evening—at least six hours before the house was on fire. Perhaps the chimney above might take fire (though it had been swept not long since) and break through into the thatch. Yet it is strange I should neither see nor smell anything of it, having been in my study in that part of the house till above half an hour after ten. Then I locked the doors of that part of the house where my wheat and other corn lay, and went to bed.

"The servants had not been in bed a quarter of an hour when the fire began. My wife being near her time, and very weak, I lay in the next chamber. A little after eleven I heard 'Fire!' cried in the street, next to which I lay. If I had been in my own chamber, as usual, we had all been lost.[1] I threw myself out of bed, got on my waistcoat and nightgown, and looked out of window; saw the reflec-

[1] But Hetty, then aged eleven, was already running to warn him. She slept in a little garret-room next to the corn-chamber, and had been awakened by a lump of the burning thatch falling on the bed by her feet.

tion of the flame, but knew not where it was; ran to my wife's chamber with one stocking on and my breeches in my hand; would have broken open the door, which was bolted within, but could not. My two eldest children were with her.[1] They rose, and ran towards the staircase, to raise the rest of the house. There I saw it was my own house, all in a light blaze, and nothing but a door between the flame and the staircase.

"I ran back to my wife, who by this time had got out of bed, naked, and opened the door. I bade her fly for her life. We had a little silver and some gold — about £20. She would have stayed for it, but I pushed her out; got her and my two eldest children downstairs (where two of the servants were now got), and asked for the keys. They knew nothing of them. I ran upstairs and found them, came down, and opened the street door. The thatch was fallen in all on fire. The north-east wind drove all the sheets of flame in my face, as if reverberated in a lamp. I got twice to the steps and was drove down again. I ran to the garden door and opened it. The fire there was more moderate. I bade them all follow, but found only two with me, and the maid with another[2] in her arms that cannot go; but all naked. I ran with them to an out-house in the garden, out of the reach of the flames; put the least in the other's lap;[3] and not finding my wife follow me, ran back into the house to seek her, but could not find her. The servants and two of the children were got out at the window. In the kitchen I found my eldest daughter, naked, and asked her for her mother. She could not tell me where she was. I took her up and carried her to the rest in the garden; came in the second time and ran upstairs, the flame breaking through the wall at the staircase; thought all my children were safe, and hoped my wife was some way got out. I then remembered my books, and felt in my pocket for the key of the chamber which led to my study. I could not find the key, though I searched a second time. Had I opened that door, I must have perished.

[1] Emilia and Sukey: Sam was away at Westminster.

[2] Charles. [3] Sukey and Patty.

"I ran down and went to my children in the garden, to help them over the wall. When I was without, I heard one of my poor lambs, left still above-stairs, about six years old, cry out, dismally, 'Help me!' I ran in again, to go upstairs, but the staircase was now all afire. I tried to force up through it a second time, holding my breeches over my head, but the stream of fire beat me down. I thought I had done my duty; went out of the house to that part of my family I had saved, in the garden, with the killing cry of my child in my ears. I made them all kneel down, and we prayed to God to receive his soul.

"I tried to break down the pales, and get my children over into the street, but could not; then went under the flame and got them over the wall. Now I put on my breeches and leaped after them. One of my maidservants that had brought out the least child, got out much at the same time. She was saluted with a hearty curse by one of the neighbours, and told that we had fired the house ourselves, the second time, on purpose! I ran about inquiring for my wife and other children; met the chief man and chief constable of the town going from my house, not towards it to help me. I took him by the hand and said, 'God's will be done!' His answer was, 'Will you never have done your tricks? You fired your house once before; did you not get enough by it then, that you have done it again?' This was cold comfort. I said, 'God forgive you! I find you are chief man still.' But I had a little better soon after, hearing that my wife was saved; and then I fell on mother earth and blessed God.

"I went to her. She was alive, and could just speak. She thought I had perished, and so did all the rest, not having seen me nor any share of eight children for a quarter of an hour; and by this time all the chambers and everything was consumed to ashes, for the fire was stronger than a furnace, the violent wind beating it down on the house. She told me afterwards how she escaped. When I went first to open the back-door, she endeavoured to force through the fire at the fore-door, but was struck back twice to the ground. She thought to have died there, but prayed to Christ to help her. She found new

strength, got up alone and waded through two or three yards of flame, the fire on the ground being up to her knees. She had nothing on but her shoes and a wrapping-gown, and one coat on her arm. This she wrapped about her breast, and got through safe into the yard, but no soul yet to help her. She never looked up or spake till I came; only when they brought her last child to her, bade them lay it on the bed. This was the lad whom I heard cry in the house, but God saved him almost by a miracle. He only was forgot by the servants, in the hurry. He ran to the window towards the yard, stood upon a chair and cried for help. There were now a few people gathered, one of whom, who loves me, helped up another to the window. The child seeing a man come into the window, was frightened, and ran away to get to his mother's chamber. He could not open the door, so ran back again. The man was fallen down from the window, and all the bed and hangings in the room where he was were blazing. They held up the man a second time, and poor Jacky leaped into his arms and was saved. I could not believe it till I had kissed him two or three times. My wife then said unto me, 'Are your books safe?' I told her it was not much, now she and all the rest were preserved. . . .

"Mr. Smith of Gainsborough, and others, have sent for some of my children. . . . I want nothing, having above half my barley saved in my barns unthreshed. I had finished my alterations in the 'Life of Christ' a little while since, and transcribed three copies of it. But all is lost. God be praised!

"I hope my wife will recover, and not miscarry, but God will give me my nineteenth child. She has burnt her legs, but they mend. When I came to her, her lips were black. I did not know her. Some of the children are a little burnt, but not hurt or disfigured. I only got a small blister on my hand. The neighbours send us clothes, for it is cold without them."

The child (Kezzy) was born and lived. The Rectory was rebuilt within a year, at a cost of £400. The day after the fire, as he groped among the ruins in the garden,

Mr. Wesley had picked up a torn leaf of his Polyglot Bible, on which these words alone were legible: *Vade; vende omnia quot habes; et attolle crucem, et sequere me.* He had come to Epworth a poor man: and now, after fifteen years, he stood as poor as then; poorer, perhaps. He had served his parishioners only to earn their detestation. But he stood unbeaten; and as he stared out of his window there gripped him — not for the first time — a fierce ironical affection for the hard landscape, the fields of his striving, even the folk who had proved such good haters. *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field* — ay, and learn to relish it as no other food. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.* Ah, but to go and surrender that ground to others — there lay the sting! With him, as with many another true man disappointed in his fate, his hopes passed from himself to fasten the more eagerly on his sons. He wanted them to be great and eminent soldiers of Christ, and he divined already that, if for one above the others, this eminence was reserved for John. But he wanted also a son of his loins to succeed him at Epworth, to hold and improve what painful inches he had gained; and again he could only think of John. Could a man devote his life to this forsaken parish and yet be a light set on a hill for the world? Had not his own life taught the folly of that hope?

He sighed and turned from the window. He had quite forgotten Hetty.

He stepped to the door to summon Johnny White-

lamb: but the sound of voices drew him across the passage to the best parlour, and there at the threshold his eyes fell on Sukey's headdress.

"Susannah!"

"Yes, father." Sukey stepped forward to be kissed.

"Take off that—that *thing!*"

"Yes, father." She untied the strings obediently.

"If your husband chooses to dress and carry you about the country like a figure of fun I cannot prevent him. But in my house remember that I am your father, and take my assurance that, although Jezebel tired her head, she had the saving grace of not looking like a fool."

Mr. Wesley turned on his heel and strode back to his books.

"Why don't you stand up to him?" asked Mr. Dick Ellison suddenly, on the road to Kelstein.

"To father?" Hetty came out of her day-dreams with a start.

"Yes: you've been having a tiff this morning, anyone can see. Young man is poison to him, hey? Why don't you take a leaf out of my book? 'Paternal authority'—and a successor of the apostles into the bargain—that's his ground. Well, I don't allow him to take it. 'Beggars can't be choosers' is mine, and I pin him to it. Oh, yes, *I'm* poison to him, but it does him good. 'That cock won't crow,' I say. He's game enough on his own dunghill, but a high-blooded lass like you ought to be his master by this time. Hint that you'll cut the painter, kick over the traces—you needn't *do* it, y' know.

Threaten you'll run and join the stage — nothing unlikely in that — and, by George, it'd bring him up with a round turn! Where's your invention?"

Hetty gazed at the horse's ears and considered. "It's easy for you, Dick, who have nothing in common with him, not even affection."

"Oh, I like the old fellow well enough, for all his airs with me," said Mr. Dick Ellison graciously.

"If they annoyed you more, you might understand him better — and me," replied Hetty.

Silence fell between them again and the gig bowled on.

# BOOK II

## I

THE frozen canal ran straight towards the sunset, into a flooded country where only a line of pollard willows, with here and there an alder, marked the course of its left bank. But where Hetty waited the banks were higher, and the red ball on the horizon sent a level shaft down the lane between them.

She was alone. Indeed the only living creature within sight was a red-breast, hunched into a ball and watching her from a wintry willow bough; the only moving object a windmill half a mile away across the level, turning its sails against the steel-gray sky — so listlessly, they seemed to be numbed.

She had strapped on a pair of skates — clumsy home-made things, and a birthday present from Johnny Whitelamb, who had fashioned them with pains, the Epworth blacksmith helping. Hetty skated excellently well — in days, be it understood, before the cutting of figures had been advanced to an art with rules and text-books. But as the poise and balanced impetus came natural to her, so in idle moments and casually she had struck out figures of her own, and practised them now with the red-breast for spectator. She was happy — her bosom's lord sitting

lightly on his throne — and all because of two letters she pulled from her pocket and re-read in the pauses of her skating.

The first was from her mother at Wroote, and told her that to-day or to-morrow her father would be arriving at Kelstein with her sister Patty. Hetty had been expecting this for some weeks. At Christmas (it was now mid-January) the Granthams had written praising her, and this had given Mr. Wesley the notion of proffering yet another of his daughters. Two days after receiving the letter he had ridden over to Kelstein with the proposal. Patty was the one chosen (Hetty could guess why), and poor Patty knew nothing of it at the time: but Mrs. Grantham had accepted almost effusively, and she was to come. In what capacity? Hetty wondered. She herself taught the children, and she could think of no other post in the household not absolutely menial. Was it selfish of her to be so glad? For one thing Patty had fewer whimsies than the rest of her sisters and, likely enough, would accept her lot as a matter of course. She seldom wept or grumbled: indeed Hetty, before now, had found her patience irritating. But to have Patty's company now seemed the most delightful thing in the world; to fling her arms around somebody who came from home!

The most delightful? Hetty turned to the second letter — and with that looked up swiftly as her ear caught the ringing sound of skates, and a young man descended, as it were, out of the sun's disc and came flying down the long alley on its ray. She put out both hands. He swooped around her in a long curve and caught them

and kissed her as he came to a standstill, panting, with a flush on each handsome cheek.

"Hetty!"

No answer to this but a sound like a coo of rapture. He is, as we should think, a personable young fellow, frank, and taking to the eye, though his easy air of mastery provokes another look at Hetty, who is worth ten of him. But to her he is a young god above whom the stars dance. Splendid creature though she be, she must comply with her sex which commands her to be passive, to be loved. With his arm about her she shuts her eyes and drinks delicious weakness; with a sense of sinking through space supported by that arm — not wholly relying on him as yet, but holding her own strength in reserve, if he should fail her.

"I have raced."

She laughed. "I bargained for that. We have so little time!"

"How long?"

"Mrs. Grantham expects me back in an hour at latest. Father and Patty will be arriving before supper, and there are the children to be put to bed."

"Let us go up the canal, then. I have a surprise for you."

They took hands — her both hands in his, their arms held crosswise to their bodies — and struck out, stroke for stroke. By the third stroke they were swinging forward in perfect rhythm, each onrush held long and level on the outside edge and curving only as it slackened. The air began to sing by Hetty's temples; her skates kept a

humming tune with her lover's. The back of his hand rested warm against her bosom.

"You skate divinely."

She scarcely heard. The world slipped past and behind her with the racing trees: she was a bird mated and flying into the sunset. Ah, here was bliss! A while ago she had been faint with love, as though a cord were being tightened around her heart: it had been hard for her to speak, hard even to draw breath. Now her lungs opened, the cord snapped and broke with a sob; and, as the sun's rim dipped, she flew faster, urgent to overtake and hold it there, to stay its red glint between the reed-beds, its bloom of brown and purple on the withered grasses. The wind of her skirt caught up the dead leaves freshly scattered on the ice and swept them along with her, whirling, like a train of birds. But, race as she would, the sun sank and the shadow of the world crept higher behind her shoulder. The last gleam died; and, lifting her eyes, Hetty saw over its grave, poised in a clear space of sky, the sickle moon.

She tried to disengage her hand, to point to it: but as his eyes sought hers with a question, she let it lie and nodded upwards instead. He saw and understood, and with their faces raised to it they held on their flight in silence: for lovers may wish with the new moon, but the first to speak will have wished in vain.

A tapping, as of someone hammering upon metal, sounded from a clump of willows ahead and upon their right. A woman's voice joined in scolding. This broke the spell; and with a laugh they disengaged hands,

separated, and let their speed bear them on side by side till it slackened and they ran to a halt beside the trees.

A barge lay here, hopelessly frozen on its way up the canal. On its deck a woman, with arms akimbo, stood over a man seated and tinkering at a kettle. She nodded as they approached.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, sir — you and the lady."

Hetty looked at her lover.

"It's all right," he explained: "only a surprise of mine, which seems to have missed fire. I had planned a small picnic here and this good woman was to have had a dish of tea ready for you — "

"How was I to know that man of mine had been fool enough to fill the kettle before tramping off to the Ring of Bells?" the good woman broke in. "Lord knows 'tisn' his way to be thoughtful, and when he tries it there's always a breakage. When I'd melted the ice, the thing began to leak like a sieve; and if this tinker fellow hadn't come along — by Providence, as you may call it — though I'd ha' been obliged to Providence for a quicker workman — "

Hetty was not listening. Her eyes had caught the tinker's, and the warm blood had run back from her face: for he was the man who had startled the sisters on the knoll, that harvest evening.

He nodded to her now with an impudent grin. "Good evening, missy. If I'd known the job was for Miss Wesley, I'd ha' put best speed into it: best work there is already."

"Hullo! Do you know this fellow?" her lover demanded.

"'Fellow'—and a moment back 'twas 'tinker'! Well, well, a man must look low and pick up what he can in these times, 'specially when his larger debtors be so backward—hey, miss? Why, to be sure I know Miss Wesley: a man don't forget a face like hers in a hurry. Glad to meet her, likewise, enjoyin' herself so free and easy. Shall I tell the old Rector, miss, next time I call, how well you was lookin', and in what company?"

Hetty saw her lover ruffling and laid a hand on his arm.

"Tuppence if you please, ma'am, and I'll be going. William Wright was never one to spoil sport: but some has luck in this world and some hasn't, and that's a fact." He grinned again as he pocketed the money.

"If you don't take your impudent face out of this, I'll smash it for you," spoke up the young man hotly.

The plumber's grin widened as, slinging his bag of tools over his shoulder, he stepped on to the frozen tow-path. "Ah, you're a bruiser, I dare say: for I've seen you outside the booth at Lincoln Fair, hail-fellow with the boxing-men on the platform. And a buck you was too, with a girl on each arm; and might pass, that far from home, for one of the gentry, the way you stood treat. But you're not: and if missy ain't more particular in her bucks, she'd do better with a respectable tradesman like me. As for smashing of faces, two can play at that game, belike: but William Wright chooses his time."

He was lurching away with a guffaw; for the tow-path

here ran within two furlongs of the highroad, and a man upon skates cannot pursue across *terra firma*.

But he had reckoned without Hetty, who had seated herself on the edge of the barge and who now shook her feet free of Johnny Whitelamb's rough clamps, and, springing from the deck to the tow-path, took him by the collar as he turned.

"Go!" she cried, and with her open palm dealt him a stinging slap across the cheek. "Go!"

The man put up his hand; fell back a moment with a dazed face, and then without a word ran for the highway, his bag of tools rattling behind him.

Never was rout more ludicrously sudden. Even in her wrath Hetty looked at her lover and broke into a laugh.

"Let me skate up the canal and head him off," said he. "Half a mile will give me lead enough to slip out of these things and collar him on the highway."

"He is not worth it. Besides, he may not be going towards Kelstein: in this light we cannot see the road or what direction he takes. Let him be, dear," Hetty persuaded, as the old woman called out from her cabin that the kettle boiled. "Our time is too precious."

Then, while he yet fumed, she suddenly grew grave.

"Was it truth he was telling?"

"Truth?" he echoed.

"Yes: about Lincoln Fair?"

"Oh, the boxing-booth, you mean? Well, my dear, there was something in it, to be sure. You wouldn't have me be a milksop, would you?"

"No-o," she mused. "But I meant what he said about — about those women. Was that true?"

He was on the point of answering with a lie; but while he hesitated she helped him by adding, "I am not a child, dear. I am twenty-seven, and older than you. Please be honest with me, always."

He was young, but had an instinct for understanding women. He revised the first lie and rejected it for a more cunning one. "It was before I met you," he said humbly. "He made the worst of it, of course, but I had rather you knew the truth. You are angry?"

Hetty sighed. "I am sorry. It seems to make our — our love — different somehow."

The bargewoman brought out their tea. She had heard nothing of the scrimmage on the bank, so swiftly had it happened and with so few words spoken.

"Hulloa — is the tinker gone? And I'd cut off a crust for him. Well, I can eat it myself, I suppose; and after all he was low company for the likes of you, though any company comes well to folks that can't pick and choose." In the act of setting herself on the cabin top she sat up stiffly and listened.

"There's a horse upon the highroad," she announced.

"A highwayman, perhaps, if all company's welcome to you."

"He won't come this way," said the woman placidly. "I loves to lie close to the road like this and see the wagons and coaches rolling by all day: for 'tis a dull life, always on the water. Now you wouldn't believe what a pleasure it gives me, to have you two here a-lov-

ering, nor how many questions I'd put if you'd let me. When is it to be, my dear?"—addressing Hetty—"but you won't answer me, I know. You're wishing me further, and go I will as soon as you've drunk your tay. Well, sir, I hope you'll take care of her: for the pretty she is, I could kiss her myself. May I?" she asked suddenly, taking Hetty's empty cup; and Hetty blushed and let her. "God send you children, you beauty!"

She paused with a cup in either hand, and in the act of squeezing herself backwards through the small cabin-door. "La, the red you've gone! I can see it with no more help than the bit of moon. 'Tis a terrible thing to be childless, and for that you can take my word." Wagging her head she vanished.

Left to themselves the two sat silent. The sound of the horse's hoofs died away down the road towards Kelstein. Had Hetty known, her father was the horseman, with Patty riding pillion behind him. Over the frozen floods came the note of a church clock, borne on the almost windless air.

"Five o'clock?" Hetty sprang up. "Time to be going, and past."

"You have not forgiven me," he murmured.

"Indeed, yes." She was, after all, a girl of robust good sense, and could smile bravely as she put an illusion by. "To be loved is marvellous and seems to make all marvels possible: but I was wrong to expect—this one. And if, since knowing me—"

"You have taught me all better things." He knelt

on the ice at her feet and began to fasten her skates. "Let me still be your pupil and look up to you, as I am looking now."

"Ah!" she pressed her palms together, "but that is just what I need — to know that we are both better for loving. I want to be sure of that, for it makes me brave when I think of father. While he forbids us, I cannot help doubting at times: and then I look into myself and see that all the world is brighter, all the world is better since I knew you. O my love, if we trust our love, and help one another —" Her rich voice thrilled and broke as she leaned forward and laid a hand on his forehead.

"See me at your feet," he whispered, looking up into eyes divinely dewy. "I am yours to teach: teach me, if you will, to be good."

They rose to their feet together — he but an inch or so the taller — and for a moment, as he took her in his arms, she held back, her palms against his shoulders, her eyes passionately seeking the truth in his. Then with a sob she kissed him and was gone.

For a moment she skated nervelessly, with hanging arms. But, watching, he saw her summon up her strength and shoot down the glimmering ice-way like a swallow let loose from his hand. So swift was her flight that, all unknowing, she overtook and passed the travellers jogging parallel with her on the highroad; and had reached Kelstein and was putting her two small charges to bed, when her father's knock sounded below stairs.

Mr. and Mrs. Grantham, though pompous, were a kindly pair: and Mrs. Grantham, entering the library where Mr. Wesley and his daughter awaited her, and observing that the girl seemed frightened or depressed (she could not determine which) rang the bell at once and sent a maid upstairs for Hetty.

Hetty entered with cheeks still glowing and eyes sparkling; went at once to her father and kissed him, and running, threw her arms around Patty, who responded listlessly.

"She needs Kelstein air," explained Mr. Wesley. "I protest it seems to agree with you, Mehetabel."

"But tell me all the news, father," Hetty demanded, with an arm about her sister's waist and a glance at Mrs. Grantham, which asked pardon for her freedom.

"Your sister shall tell it, my dear," answered that good woman, "while I am persuading your father to sup with us. I have given them a room together," she explained to Mr. Wesley. "I thought it would be pleasanter for them."

"You are kindness itself, madam."

Hetty led the way upstairs. "It is all strange at first, dear: I know the feeling. But see how cosy we shall be." She threw the door open, and showed a room far more comfortably furnished than any at Wroote or Epworth. The housemaid, who adored Hetty, had even lit a fire in the grate. Two beds with white coverlets, coarse but exquisitely clean, stood side by side — "Though we won't use them both. I must have you in my arms, and drink in every word you have to tell me

till you drop off to sleep in spite of me, and hold you even then. Oh, Patty, it is good to have you here!"

But Patty, having untied the strings of her hat, tossed it on to the edge of her bed and collapsed beside it.

"I wish I was dead!" she announced.

## II

JOHN ROMLEY was the cause of her exile. This young man had been a pupil of the Rector's, and studied divinity with him for a while before matriculating at Lincoln College, Oxford; where in due course he took his degree, and whence he returned, in deacon's orders, to take charge of the endowed school at Epworth and to help in the spiritual work of the parish. Mr. Wesley's experience of curates had been far from happy,[1] but Romley promised to be the bright exception

[1] For an instance.—In the years 1710–12, during long absences in London to attend Convocation, he had left his parish to the care of a curate named Inman, the sum of whose doctrine was that men should pay their debts and dwell in Christian amity on short credit. The parishioners grew weary and, on Mr. Wesley's revisiting his home during an adjournment, complained of this teaching as "barren." He at once sent for the curate and desired him to prepare a sermon upon the words, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6). Accordingly next Sunday the curate gave out his text and began: "Friends, faith is a most excellent virtue, and it produces other virtues also. In particular it makes a man pay his debts": and so continued for about fifteen minutes.

The Rector had excellent reasons for agreeing that this sort of thing might be tedious. But he departed for London again, having taken no further steps to put an end to it. Mrs. Wesley, in self-defence, had begun to hold a Sunday evening service in the rectory kitchen for her children and servants, when she read a sermon and talked freely and informally of the Christian life. The servants told their friends, who asked permission to attend: and so the congrega-

in a long list of failures. (It was he who discovered and introduced Johnny Whitelamb to the household.) He was sociable; had pleasant manners, a rotund figure not yet inclining to coarseness, a pink and white complexion, and a mellifluous tenor voice. To his voice, alas! he owed most of his misfortunes in life.

The Rector had no high opinion of his brains: but tolerated him, and at first looked on leniently enough when he began to pay his addresses to Patty. Indeed the courtship proceeded to the gentle envy of her sisters until one fatal night when Romley, in the rectory parlour at Wroote, attuned his voice to sing the "Vicar of Bray." In his study Mr. Wesley heard it. He, of all men, was no Vicar of Bray, albeit he had abjured Dissent: but he felt his cloth insulted, and by this fribble of his own order. It was treason in short, and he bounced into the parlour as Mr. Romley carolled:

"When gracious Anne became our Queen,
The Church of England's glory,
Another face of things was seen,
And I became a Tory;
Occasional Conformists base —"

tion increased to two hundred souls. Inman was furious and wrote up to London that Mrs. Wesley was turning the parsonage into a conventicle. The Rector wrote to his wife desiring her to give over the meetings. She answered with a spirited defence, and concluded: "If, after all this, you think fit to dissolve the assembly, do not tell me that you *desire* me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your *positive commands*, in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There was a scene, and it ended in Romley being shown the door and Patty forbidden to have speech with him. Actually she had not set eyes on him since that night: but the Rector unaccountably omitted to forbid their corresponding. Now Patty, the most literally minded of her sex, had a niggling obstinacy in pursuit of her ends. She would obey to a hair's breadth: but, nothing having been said about letters, letters passed. Piecing the truth together from her incoherent railings, Hetty learned that the Rector had happened upon a scrap of Romley's handwriting, had lost his temper furiously, and given sentence of banishment.

Patty in love showed none of her sister's glorious fervour: but stared obtusely, even sulkily, when Hetty hinted at her own secret and, pressing her waist, spoke of love with fearless elation, yet as of a sacred thing.

"Oh, you're too poetical for me!" she interrupted.

This was depressing.

"And I wish I was in my grave," added Patty, looking like a martyr in a wet blanket.

Thinking to put spirit into her, Hetty became more explicit and proved that love might find out a way between Epworth and Kelstein—nay, even spoke of her own clandestine meeting that very afternoon. Her cheeks glowed. Nor for a minute did she observe that Patty, listless at the beginning of the tale, was staring at her with round eyes.

"You mean to tell me that you meet him!"

"Why, of course I do."

"But father forbade it!"

"To be sure he did."

"Then all I can say is" — Patty rose to her feet in the strength of her disapproval — "that I call it disgraceful, and I'm perfectly ashamed of you!"

"But, good Heavens! he forbade you to see Romley."

"But not to write."

"O-o!" Hetty mused with her pretty mouth shaped to the letter. "And now, I suppose, he has forbidden that too?"

"Of course he has."

"And you are going to obey?"

"Of course I am."

It was Hetty's turn to stare wide-eyed. "You are going to give Romley up?" she asked very slowly.

"Yes, yes, yes — and I wish I was in my grave!" Patty collapsed again dismally, but sat upright after a moment. "As for your behaviour, 'tis positively wicked, and I think father ought to be told of it!"

Hetty put out both hands; but instead of shaking her sister (as she was minded to do) she let the open palms fall gently upon her shoulders and looked her in the face.

"Then I advise you not to tell him, dear. For in the first place it would do no good."

"Do no good?"

"Well, then, it would make no difference."

"You mean to — run away — with him?" gasped Patty, her eyes involuntarily turning towards the window.

The glance set Hetty's laughter rippling. "Pat — Pat! don't be a goose. I shall not run away with him from this house. I promised mother."

"You — promised — mother!" Patty was reduced to stammering echoes.

"Dear me, yes. You must not suppose yourself the only one of her children she understands." Hetty, being human, could not forgo this little slap. "Now wash your face, like a good girl, and come down to supper: and afterwards you shall tell me all the news of home. There's one thing" — and she eyed Patty drolly — "I can trust you to be accurate."

"Do you mean to tell me that you can look father in the face —" But here Patty broke off, at the sound of hoofs on the gravel below.

"There will be no need," said Hetty quietly, "if, as I think, he is mounting Bounce to ride home."

"Bounce? How did you know that Bounce brought us?" — for Bounce was Mrs. Wesley's nag, and the Rector usually rode an old gray named Mettle, but had taken of late to a filly of his own breeding.

"I ought to remember Bounce's shuffle," answered Hetty. "Nay, I should have recognized it on the road two miles back if — if I hadn't been —"

She came to a full stop, in some confusion. Nevertheless she was right; and the girls arrived downstairs to learn from Mrs. Grantham that their father had ridden off, declining her offer of supper and scoffing at her fears of highwaymen.

And the days went by. Hetty could not help telling herself that Patty was a disappointment. But she was saved from reflecting on it overmuch: for Mrs. Grantham (after forty years of comfort without one) had con-

ceived a desire to be waited on and have her hair dressed by a maid, and between Mrs. Grantham's inability to discover precisely what she wanted done by Patty, and Patty's unhandiness in doing it, and Mrs. Grantham's anxiety to fill up Patty's time, and Patty's lack of inventiveness, the pair kept Hetty pretty constantly near her wit's end.

Concerning her lover she attempted no more confidences. But, alone, she pondered much on Patty's reproof, which set her arguing out the whole case afresh. For, absurd though its logic was, it had touched her conscience. Was it conscience (she asked herself) or but the old habit of trembling at her father's word, which kept her so uneasy in disobeying him?

She came to no new conclusion; for a sense of injustice gave a twist to her thinking from the start. All his daughters held Mr. Wesley in awe: they never dreamed, for instance, of comparing their lovers with him in respect of dignity or greatness. They assumed that their brothers inherited some portion of that greatness, but they required none in the men to whom they were ready to give their hands; nay, perhaps unconsciously, rejoiced in the lack of it, having lived with it at home and found it uncomfortable.

They were proud of it, of course, and knew that they themselves had some touch of it, if but a lunar glow. They read the assurance in their mother's speech, in her looks; and, moving among the Epworth folk as neighbours, yet apart, they had acquired a high pride of family which derived nothing from vulgar chatter about titled,

rich, and far-off relatives; but, taking ancestry for granted, found sustenance enough in the daily life at the parsonage and the letters from Westminster and Oxford. Aware of some worth in themselves, they saw themselves pinched of food, exiled from many companions, shut out from social gatherings for want of pocket-money and decent attire, while amid all the muddle of his affairs their father could tramp for miles and pledge the last ounce of his credit to scrape a few pounds for John or Charles. They divined his purpose: but they felt the present injustice.

They never regarded him as just. And this was mainly his own fault, or at least the fault of his theory that women, especially daughters, were not to be reasoned with but commanded. Hetty, for example, had an infinite capacity for self-sacrifice. At an appeal from him she would have surrendered, not small vanities only, but desires more than trivial, for the brothers whom in her heart she loved to fondness. But the sacrifice was ever exacted, not left to her good-nature; the right word never spoken.

And now, under the same numbing deference, her mother had failed her at a moment when all her heart cried out in its need. Hetty loved her lover. Perhaps, if allowed to fare abroad, consort with other girls, and learn, with responsibility, to choose better, she had never chosen this man. She had chosen him now. Poor Hetty!

But that she did wrong to meet him secretly her conscience accused her. She had been trained religiously.

Had she no religion, then, upon which to stay her sense of duty?

Where a mother has failed, even the Bible may fail. Hetty read her Bible: but just because its austerer teaching had been bound too harshly upon her at home, she turned by instinct to the gentler side which reveals Christ's loving-kindness, His pity, His indulgence. All generous natures lean towards this side, and to their honour, but at times also to their very great danger. For the austerity is meant for them who most need it. Also the austere rules are more definite, which makes them a surer guide for the soul desiring goodness, but passionately astray. It spurns them, demanding loving-kindness; and discovers too late that loving-kindness dictated them.

## III

TWO mornings after Patty's arrival, Hetty sat in the schoolroom telling a Bible story to her pupils, George Grantham and small Rebecca; the one aged eight, the other barely five. They were by no means clever children; but they knew a good story when they heard one, and Hetty held them to the adventures of Joseph and his Brethren, although great masses of snow were sliding off the roof, and every now and then toppling down past the window with a rush — which every child knows to be fascinating. For the black frost had broken up at last in a twelve hours' downfall of snow, and this in turn had yielded to a soft southerly wind. The morning sunshine poured in through the schoolroom window and took all colour out of the sea-coal fire.

"One night Joseph dreamed a dream which he told next morning to his brothers. And his dream was that they were all in the harvest-field, binding sheaves: and when Joseph had bound his sheaf, it stood upright, but the other sheaves around slid and fell flat, as if they were bowing on their faces before it. When he told this, it made his brothers angry, because it seemed to mean that he would be a greater man than any of them."

"I don't wonder they were angry," broke in George, who was the Granthams' son and heir, and had a baby

brother of whom he tried hard not to be jealous. "Joseph wasn't the oldest, was he?"

"No: he was the youngest of all, except Benjamin."

"And even if he dreamed it, he needn't have gone about bragging. It was bad enough, his having that coat of many colours. I say, Miss Wesley, — you're not a boy, of course, — but how would *you* feel if your father made everything of one of your brothers?"

"I wonder if he dreamed it on a Friday?" piped Rebecca.

"Why, child?"

"Because Martha says" — Martha was the Granthams' cook — "that Friday's dream on Saturday told is bound to come true before you are old."

"We shall find out if it came true. Go on, Miss Wesley."

"But if it *was* Friday's dream," Rebecca persisted, "and he wanted it to come true, he couldn't help telling it."

"Couldn't help being a sneak, I suppose you mean!"

A sound outside the window cut short this argument. All glanced up: but it came this time from no avalanche of snow. Someone had planted a ladder against the house, and the top of the ladder was scraping against the window-sill.

"Too short by six feet," Hetty heard a voice say, and held her breath. The ladder was joggled a little and fixed again. Footsteps began to ascend it. A face and a pair of broad shoulders rose into sight over the sill. They belonged to William Wright.

"I — I think, dears, we had better find some other room."

Hetty had sprung up and felt herself shaking from head to foot. For the moment he was not looking in, but stood at the top of the ladder with his head thrown back, craving for a view of the water-trough under the eaves.

"About two feet to the right," he called to someone below. "No use shifting the ladder; 'twon't reach. Stay a minute, though — I don't believe 'tis a leak at all. Here — "

He felt the closed window with the palm of his hand, then peered through it into the room; and his eyes and Hetty's met.

"Well, I do declare! Good morning, miss: 'tis like fate, the way I keep running across you. Now would you be so kind as to lift the latch on your side and push the window gently? The frame opens outwards and I want to steady myself by it."

She obeyed, and was turning haughtily to follow the children when George, who loitered in the doorway watching, called out:

"Is he coming into the room, Miss Wesley?"

She glanced over her shoulder and halted. The man clearly did not mean to enter, but had scrambled up to the sill, and balanced himself there gripping the window-frame and leading outwards at an angle which made her giddy. The sill was narrow, too, and sloping. She caught her breath, not daring to move.

He seemed to hear her, for he answered jocularly:

"'Tis to be hoped the hinges are strong — eh, missy? — or there's an end of William Wright."

"Do, please, be careful!"

"What's that to you? You hate me bad enough. Look here — send the child out of the room and give me a push: a little one'd do, and you'll never get a better chance."

Still she held her breath; and he went on, gazing upwards and apparently speaking to the eaves.

"Not worth it, I suppose you'll say? — Don't you make too sure. Now if I can get my fingers over the launder, here —" He worked his way to the right, to the very edge of the sill, and reached sideways and upwards, raising himself higher and higher on tip-toe. Hetty heard a warning grunted from below.

"No use," he announced. "I can't reach it by six inches."

"What are you trying to do?" Hetty asked in a low voice, with a hand over her heart.

"Why, there's a choke here — dead leaves or something — and the roof-water's running down the side of the house."

She glanced hurriedly about the room, stepped to the fireplace and picked up a poker — a small one with a crook at the end. "Will this help?" she asked, passing it out.

"Eh? the very thing!" He took it, and presently she heard it scraping on the pipe in search of the obstruction. "Cleared it, by Jingo! and that's famous." He lowered himself upon the flat of his broad soles. "You

ought to ha' been a plumber's wife. My! if I had a head-piece like that to think for me — let alone to look at!"

"Give me back the poker, please."

"No tricks, now!" He handed it back, chuckled, and lowering himself back to the topmost rung of the ladder, stood in safety. "You're as white as a sheet. Was you scared I'd fall? Lord, I like to see you look like that! it a'most makes me want to do it again. Look here —"

"For pity's sake —"

Was the man mad? And how was it he held her listening to his intolerable talk? He was actually scrambling up to the sill again, but paused with his eyes on hers. "It hurts you? Very well, then, I won't: but I owe you something for that slap in the face, you know."

"You deserved it!" Hetty exclaimed, flushing as she recoiled from terror to unreasonable wrath, and at the same moment hating herself for arguing with him.

"Did I? Well, I bear ye no malice. Go slow, and overlook offences — that's William Wright's way, and I've no pride, so I gets it in the end. Now some men, after being treated like that, would have sat down and wrote a letter to your father about your goings on. I thought of it. Says I, 'It don't take more than a line from me, and the fat's in the fire.' Mind, I don't say that I won't, but I ha'n't done it yet. And look here — I'm a journeyman, as you know, and on the tramp for jobs. I push on for Lincoln this afternoon; and what I say to you before leaving is this — You're a lady, every inch. Don't you go and make yourself too cheap with that fella. He's a pretty man enough, but there ain't no honesty in him."

He was gone. Hetty drew a long breath. Then, having waited while the ladder too was withdrawn, she fetched back the children and set them before their copy-books.

"*Honesty is the best policy*" — She saw Master George fairly started on this text, with his head on one side and his tongue working in the corner of his mouth; and drawing out paper and ink began to write a letter home.

"Dear Mother —" she wrote, glanced at George's copy-book, then at the window. Five minutes passed. She started and thrust pen and paper back into the drawer. Patty must write.

## IV

### 1. *From the Rev. Samuel Wesley to his son John, at Christ Church, Oxford*

Wroote, *January* 5, 1725.

DEAR SON,—Your brother[1] will receive £5 for you next Saturday, if Mr. S. is paid the £10 he lent you; if not, I must go to H. But I promise you I shan't forget that you are my son, if you do not that I am

Your affectionate father,

SAMUEL WESLEY.

### 2. *From the same to the same*

Wroote, *January* 26, 1725.

DEAR SON,—I am so well pleased with your decent behaviour, or at least with your letters, that I hope I shall not have occasion to remember any more some things that are past; and since you have now for some time bit upon the bridle, I'll take care hereafter to put a little honey upon it as oft as I am able. But then it shall be of my own *mero motu*, as the last £5 was; for I will bear no rivals in my kingdom.

[1] Samuel Wesley, Jun., acted as John's banker from his entrance at the Charterhouse until (it would seem) he took his degree at Oxford. John had not avoided debts—the "things that are past" alluded to in the next letter. In May of this year (1725) Samuel presented his balance-sheet, and, as will be seen, it gave the Rector a shock.

I did not forget you with Dr. Morley,[1] but have moved that way as much as possible; though I must confess, hitherto, with no great prospect or hopes of success. As for what you mention of entering into Holy Orders, it is indeed a great work; and I am pleased to find you think it so, as well as that you do not admire a callow clergyman any more than I do.

And now the providence of God (I hope it was) has engaged me in such a work wherein you may be very assistant to me, I trust promote His glory and at the same time notably forward your own studies; for I have some time since designed an edition of the Holy Bible, in octavo, in the Hebrew, Chaldee, Septuagint, and Vulgar Latin, and have made some progress in it: the whole scheme whereof I have not time at present to give you, of which scarce any soul yet knows except your brother Sam.

What I desire of you in this article is, firstly, that you would immediately fall to work, read diligently the Hebrew text in the Polyglot, and collate it exactly with the Vulgar Latin, which is in the second column, writing down all (even the least) variations or differences between them. To these I would have you add the Samaritan text in the last column but one, which is the very same with the Hebrew, except in some very few places, only differing in the Samaritan character (I think the true old Hebrew), the alphabet whereof you may learn

[1] Dr. Morley was Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, where already John had hopes of a fellowship. The connection between that College and its county was close in those days: and the Doctor held the cure also of Scotton, near Gainsborough.

in a day's time, either from the Prolegomena in Walton's Polyglot, or from his grammar. In a twelvemonth's time, sticking close to it in the forenoons, you will get twice through the Pentateuch; for I have done it four times the last year, and am going over it the fifth, collating the Hebrew and two Greek, the Alexandrian and the Vatican, with what I can get of Symmachus and Theodotian, etc. Nor shall you lose your reward for it, either in this or the other world.

In the afternoon read what you will, and be sure to walk an hour, if fair, in the fields. Get Thirlby's Chrysostom *De Sacerdotio;* master it — digest it. I like your verses on Psalm lxxxv., and would not have you bury your talent. All are well and send duties.

Work and write while you can. You see Time has shaken me by the hand, and Death is but a little behind him. My eyes and heart are now almost all I have left; and bless God for them. I am not for your going over-hastily into Orders. When I am for your taking them, you shall know it.

Your affectionate father,

SAM. WESLEY.

3. *From Mrs. Wesley to her son John*

*February 25th,* 1725.

DEAR JACKEY, — I was much pleased with your letter to your father about taking Orders, and like the proposal well; but it is an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike. I approve the disposition of your mind and think the sooner

you are a deacon the better, because it may be an inducement to greater application in the study of practical divinity, which I humbly conceive is the best study for candidates for Orders. Mr. Wesley differs from me, and would engage you (I believe) in critical learning; which, though accidentally of use, is in no wise preferable to the other. I dare advise nothing: God Almighty direct and bless you! I long to see you. We hear nothing of Hetty, which gives us some uneasiness. We have all writ, but can get no answer. I wish all be well. Adieu.

SUSANNAH WESLEY.

4. *From the Rev. Samuel Wesley to his son John*

Wroote, *March* 13, 1724–5.

DEAR SON,—I have both yours, and have changed my mind since my last. I now incline to your going this summer into Orders. But in the first place, if you love yourself or me, pray heartily. I will struggle hard but I will get money for your Orders, and something more. Mr. Downes has spoken to Mr. Morley about you, who says he will inquire of your character.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." This, with blessing, from your loving father,

SAMUEL WESLEY.

5. *From Emilia Wesley to her brother John*

Wroote, *April 7th*, 1725.

DEAR BROTHER,—Yours of March 7th I received, and thank you for your care in despatching so speedily the business I desired you to do. It is the last of that kind

I shall trouble you with. No more shall I write or receive letters to and from that person. But lest you should run into a mistake and think we have quarrelled, I assure you we are perfect friends; we think, wish, and judge alike, but what avails it? We are both miserable. He has not differed with my mother, but she loves him not, because she esteems him the unlucky cause of a deep melancholy in a beloved child. For his own sake it is that I cease writing, because it is now his interest to forget me.

Whether you will be engaged before thirty or not, I cannot determine; but if my advice be worth listening to, never engage your affections before your worldly affairs are in such a position that you may marry very soon. The contrary practice has proved very pernicious in our family; and were I to live my time over again, and had the same experience as I have now, were it for the best man in England, I would not wait one year. I know you are a young man, encompassed with difficulties, that has passed through many hardships already, and probably must through many more before you are easy in the world; but, believe me, if ever you come to suffer the torment of a hopeless love, all other afflictions will seem small in comparison of it. And that you may not think I speak at random, take some account of my past life, more than ever I spoke to anyone.

After the fire, when I was seventeen years old, I was left alone with my mother, and lived easy for one year, having most necessaries, though few diversions, and never going abroad. Yet after working all day I read

some pleasant book at night, and was contented enough; but after we were gotten into our house, and all the family were settled, in about a year's time I began to find out that we were ruined. Then came on London journeys, Convocations of blessed memory, that for seven years my father was at London, and we at home in intolerable want and affliction. Then I learnt what it was to seek money for bread, seldom having any without such hardships in getting it that much abated the pleasure of it. Thus we went on, growing worse and worse; all us children in scandalous want of necessaries for years together; vast income, but no comfort or credit with it. Then I went to London with design to get into some service, failed of that, and grew acquainted with Leybourne. Ever after that I lived in close correspondence with him. When anything grieved me, he was my comforter; and what though our affairs grew no better, yet I was tolerably easy, thinking his love sufficient recompense for the absence of all other worldly comforts. Then ill fate, in the shape of a near relation, laid the groundwork of my misery, and—joined with my mother's command and my own indiscretion—broke the correspondence between him and I [*sic*].

That dismal winter I shall ever remember; my mother was sick, confined even to her bed, my father in danger of arrests every day. I had a large family to keep, and a small sum to keep it on; and yet in all this care the loss of Leybourne was heaviest. For nearly half a year I never slept half a night, and now, provoked at all my relations, resolved never to marry. Wishing to be out of

their sight, I began first to think of going into the world. A vacancy happening in Lincoln boarding school, I went thither; and though I had never so much as seen one before, I fell readily into that way of life; and I was so pleased to see myself in good clothes, with money in my pocket, and respected in a strange manner by everyone, that I seemed gotten into another world.

Here I lived five years and should have done longer, but the school broke up; and my father having got Wroote living, my mother was earnest for my return. I was told what pleasant company was at Bawtry, Doncaster, etc., and that this addition to my father, with God's ordinary blessing, would make him a rich man in a few years. I came home again, in an evil hour for me. I was well clothed, and, while I wanted nothing, was easy enough. But this winter, when my own necessaries began to decay and my money was most of it spent, I found what a condition I was in — every trifling want was either not supplied, or I had more trouble to procure it than it was worth.

I know not when we have had so good a year, both at Wroote and Epworth, as this year; but instead of saving anything to clothe my sister or myself, we are just where we were. A noble crop has almost all gone, beside Epworth living, to pay some part of those infinite debts my father has run into, which are so many (as I have lately found out) that were he to save £50 a year he would not be clear in the world this seven years. One thing I warn you of: let not my giving you this account be any hindrance to your affairs. If you want assistance in any

case, my father is as able to give it now as any time these last ten years; nor shall we be ever the poorer for it. We enjoy many comforts. We have plenty of good meat and drink, fuel, etc.; have no duns, nor any of that tormenting care to provide bread which we had at Epworth. In short, could I lay aside all thoughts of the future, and be content with three things, money, liberty, and clothes, I might live very comfortably. While my mother lives I am inclined to stay with her; she is so very good to me, and has so little comfort in the world beside, that I think it barbarous to abandon her. As soon as she is in heaven, or perhaps sooner if I am quite tired out, I have fully fixed on a state of life; a way indeed that my parents may disapprove, but that I do not regard. And now

"Let Emma's hapless case be falsely told
By the rash young, or the ill-natured old."

You, that know my hard fortune, I hope will never hastily condemn me for anything I shall be driven to do by stress of fortune that is not directly sinful. As for Hetty, we have heard nothing of her these three months past. Mr. Grantham, I hear, has behaved himself very honourably towards her, *but there are more gentlemen besides him in the world.*

I have quite tired you now. Pray be faithful to me. Let me have one relation I can trust: never give any hint to anyone of aught I write to you: and continue to love

Your unhappy but affectionate sister,

EMILIA WESLEY.

### 6. *From the Rev. Samuel Wesley to his son John*

Wroote, *May* 10, 1725.

DEAR SON, — Your brother Samuel with his wife and child are here. I did what I could that you might have been in Orders this Trinity; but I doubt your brother's journey hither has, for the present, disconcerted our plans, though you will have more time to prepare yourself for Ordination, which I pray God you may, as I am your loving father, SAMUEL WESLEY.

### 7. *From Mrs. Wesley to her son John*

Wroote, *June 8th*, 1725.

DEAR SON, — I have Kempis by me; but have not read him lately. I cannot recollect the passages you mention; but believing you do him justice, I do positively aver that he is extremely wrong in that impious, I was about to say blasphemous, suggestion that God, by an irreversible decree, has determined any man to be miserable, even in this world. His intentions, as Himself, are holy, just, and good; and all the miseries incident to men here or hereafter spring from themselves.

Your brother has brought us a heavy reckoning for you and Charles. God be merciful to us all! Dear Jack, I earnestly beseech Almighty God to bless you. Adieu.

SUSANNAH WESLEY.

### 8. *From the Rev. Samuel Wesley to his son John*

Bawtry, *September 1st*, 1725.

DEAR SON, — I came hither to-day because I cannot be at rest till I make you easier. I could not possibly

manufacture any money for you here sooner than next Saturday. On Monday I design to wait on Dr. Morley, and will try to prevail with your brother to return you £8 with interest. I will assist you in the charges for Ordination, though I am just now struggling for life. This £8 you may depend on the next week, or the week after. S. WESLEY.

### 9. *From the same to the same*

Gainsborough, *Sept. 7th*, 1725.

DEAR SON JOHN, — With much ado, you see I am for once as good as my word. Carry Dr. Morley's note to the bursar. I hope to send you more, and, I believe, by the same hand. God fit you for your great work. Fast — watch — pray — endure — be happy; towards which you shall never want the ardent prayers of your affectionate father, S. WESLEY.

On Sunday, September 19th, 1725, John Wesley, being twenty-two years old, was ordained deacon by Dr. John Potter, Bishop of Oxford, in Christ Church Cathedral.

## V

OF the letters received from home by him during the struggle to raise money for his Ordination fees, the above are but extracts. Let us go back to the month of May, and to Kelstein.

"Patty dear," asked Hetty one morning, "have you heard lately of John Romley?"

She was sitting up in bed with a letter in her hand. It had come yesterday; and Patty, brushing her hair before the glass, guessed from whom. She did not answer.

"He is at Lincoln; he has gone to try for the precentorship of the cathedral," Hetty announced.

"You know perfectly well that we do not correspond. I have too much principle."

"I know, dear," sighed Hetty, with her eyes fixed meditatively upon her sister's somewhat angular back. "I hope he is none the worse for it: for I have my reasons for wishing to think of him as a good man." Patty paused with brush in air, her eyes on Hetty's image in the glass; but Hetty went on inconsequently: "But surely you get word of him, now and then, in those letters from home which you hide from me? Patty, I am a stronger woman than you: and you may think yourself lucky I haven't put you through the door before this,

laid violent hands on the whole budget, and read them through at my leisure. You invite it, too, by locking them up; which against a determined person would avail nothing and is therefore merely an insult, my dear."

"You know perfectly well why I do not show you my letters. They are all crying out for news of you — mother, and Emmy and Molly: even poor honest Nan breaks off writing about John Lambert and when the wedding is to be and what she is to wear, and begs to hear if there be anything wrong. And all I can answer is, that you are well, with a line or two about the children. They must think me a fool, and it has kept me miserable ever since I came. But more I *will* not say. At least —" She seemed about to correct herself, but came to an abrupt halt and began brushing vigorously. Hetty could not see the flush on her sallow face.

"Dear old Molly!" Hetty murmured the name of her favourite sister. "But I could not write without telling her and loading her poor conscience."

"Much you think of conscience, with a letter from him in your hand at this minute!"

"But I do think of conscience. And the best proof of it is, I am going home."

"Going home!" Patty faced about now, and with a scared face.

"Yes." Hetty put her feet out of bed and sat for a moment on the edge of it. "Mrs. Grantham paid me my wages yesterday, and now I have three pounds in my pocket. I am going home — to tell them."

"You mean to tell them!"

"Not a doubt of it. But why look as if you had seen a ghost?"

"And what do you suppose will happen?"

"Mother and Molly will cry, and Emmy will make an oration which I shall interrupt, and Kezzy will open her eyes at such a monster, and father will want to horsewhip me, but restrain himself and turn me from the door. Or perhaps he will lock me up—oh, Patty, cannot you see that I'm weeping, not joking? But it has to be done, and I am going to be brave and do it."

"Very well, then. Now listen to me.—You cannot."

"Cannot? Why?"

"There's no room, to begin with—not a bed in the house. Sam and his wife are there, and the child, on a visit."

"Sam there! And you never told me.—Oh, Pat, Pat, and I might have missed him!" She sprang up from the bed and began her dressing in a fever of haste.

"But what will you do?"

"Go home and find Sam, of course."

"I don't see how Sam can help you. He did not help Emmy much: and his wife will be there, remember."

There was no love lost betweeen Sam's sisters and Sam's wife—a practical little woman with a sharp tongue and a settled conviction that her husband's relatives were little better than lunatics. She understood the Rectory's strict rules of conduct as little as its feckless poverty (for so she called it). That a household which held its head so high should be content with a parlour furnished like a barn, sit down to meals scarcely

better than the day-labourers' about them, and rest ignored by families of decent position in the neighbourhood, puzzled and irritated her. "Better he paid his debts and fed his children," was her answer when Sam put in a word for his father's spiritual ambitions. Her slight awe of the Wesleys' abilities — even she could not deny them brains — only drove her to intrench herself more strongly behind her practical wisdom; and she never abandoned her position (which had saved her in a thousand domestic arguments) that her sisters-in-law had been trained as savages in the wilds. She had a habit of addressing them as children: and her interference, some years before, between Emilia and young Leybourne, had been conducted by letter addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Wesley and without pretence of consulting Emilia's feelings.

Hetty pondered this for a moment, but without pause in her dressing.

"Besides," urged Patty, "they may be gone by this time. Mother did not say how long the visit was to last; only that Sam had brought his bill for Jacky and Charles, and it is enormous. Father will be in the worst possible temper."

"Of all the wet blankets—" began Hetty, but was interrupted by the ringing of a bell in the corner above her bed. It summoned her to run and dress Rebecca, who slept in a small room opening out of Mrs. Grantham's.

Hetty departed in a whirl. Patty stood considering. "She never would! 'Tis a mercy sometimes she doesn't mean all she says."

But this time Hetty meant precisely what she said. Having dressed Rebecca, she suddenly faced upon Mrs. Grantham, who stood watching her as she turned back the bed-clothes to air and folded the child's nightdress.

"With your leave, madam, I wish to go home to-day."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mrs. Grantham. "You must be mad."

"I know how singular you must think it: and indeed I am very sorry to put you out. Yet I have a particular reason for asking."

"Quite impossible, Miss Wesley."

But, as Mr. Grantham had afterwards to tell her, a householder has no means in free England of coercing a grown woman determined to quit the shelter of his roof and within an hour. The poor lady was nonplussed: she had not dreamed that life's tranquil journey lay exposed to a surprise at once so simple and so disconcerting, and in her vexation she came near to hysterics.

"What to make of your sister, I know not," she cried, twenty minutes later, seating herself to have her hair dressed by Patty.

"Her temper was always a little uncertain," said Patty sagely. "I think father spoilt her by teaching her Greek and poetry and such things."

"Greek! You don't tell me that Greek makes a person want to walk out of a comfortable house at a moment's notice and leave my poor darlings on the stream!"

"Oh, no," agreed Patty. "You will not allow it, of course?"

"Perhaps you'll tell me how to prevent it? In all my life I don't remember being so much annoyed."

So Hetty had her way, packed a small bundle, and was ready at the gate for the passing of the carrier's van which would set her down within a mile of home. She had acted on an impulse, unreasoning, but not to be resisted. She felt the crisis of her life approaching and had urgent need, before it came on her, to make confession and cleanse her soul. She knew she was hurrying towards a tempest; but, whatever it might wreck, she panted for the clear sky beyond. In her fever the van seemed to crawl and the miles to drag themselves out interminably..

She was within a mile of her journey's end when a horseman met and passed the van at a jog-trot. Hetty glanced after him, wrenched open the door and sprang out upon the road with a cry —

"Father!"

Mr. Wesley heard her and turned his head; then reined up the filly and came slowly back. The van was at a standstill, the driver craning his head and staring aft in wholly ludicrous bewilderment.

"Dropped anything?" he asked, as Hetty ran to him. She thrust the fare into his hand without answering and faced around again to meet her father.

He came slowly, with set jaws. He offered no greeting.

"I was expecting this," he said. "Indeed, I was riding to Kelstein to fetch you home."

"But — but why?" she stammered.

"Why?" A short savage laugh broke from him,

almost like a dog's bark; but he held his temper down. "Because I do not choose to have a decent household infected by a daughter of mine. Because, if sisters of yours must needs be exposed to the infection, it shall be where I am present to watch them and control you. I have received a letter —"

She stared at him dismayed, remembering the man Wright and his threat.

"And upon that you judge me, without a hearing?" She let her arms drop beside her.

"Will you deny it? Will you deny you have been in the habit of meeting — no, I see you will not. Apparently Mrs. Grantham has dismissed you."

"Sir, Mrs. Grantham has not dismissed me. I came away against her wish, because —"

"Well?" He waited, chewing his wrath.

It was idle now to say she had come meaning to confess. That chance had gone.

"I ask you to remember, sir, that I never promised not to meet him." Since a fight it must be, she picked up all her courage for it. "I had no right to promise it."

His mouth opened, but shut again like a trap. He had the self-control to postpone battle. "We will see about that," he said grimly. "Meanwhile, please you mount behind me and ride."

As they jogged towards Wroote, Hetty, holding on by her father's coat, seemed to feel in her finger-tips the wrath pent up and working in his small body. She was profoundly dejected; so profoundly that she almost forgot to be indignant with William Wright; but she had

no thought of striking her colours. She built some hope upon Sam, too. Sam might not take her part openly, but he at least had always been kind to her.

"Does Sam know?" she took heart to ask as they came in sight of the parsonage.

"Sam?"

"Patty tells me he is here with his wife and little Philly."

"I am glad to say Patty is mistaken. They took their departure yesterday."

## VI

"OH, Hetty!" was all Molly could find to say, rushing into the back garret where Hetty stood alone, and clinging to her with a long kiss.

Hetty held the dear deformed body against her bosom for a while, then relaxing her arms, turned towards the small window in the eaves. "My dear," she answered with a wry smile, "it had to come, you see, and now we must go through with it."

"But who could have written that wicked letter? Mother will not tell us — even if she knows, which I doubt."

"I fancy I know. And you must not exaggerate, even in your love for me. I don't suppose the letter was wicked, though it may have been spiteful."

"It accused you of the most dreadful things."

"If it be dreadful to meet the man you love, and in secret, then I have been behaving dreadfully."

"O-oh!"

"And that is just what I came home to confess." She paused at the sight of Molly's face. "What, are you against me, too? Then I must fight this out alone, it seems."

"Darling Hetty, you must not — ah, don't look so at me!"

But Hetty turned her back. "Please leave me."

"If you had only written —"

"That would take long to explain. I am tired, and it is not worth while; please leave me."

"But you do not understand. I had to come, although for the time father has forbidden us to speak with you —"

Hetty stepped to the door and held it open. "Then one of his daughters at any rate shall be dutiful," she said.

Molly flung her an imploring look and walked out, sobbing.

"Is Hetty not coming down to supper?" Emilia asked in the kitchen that evening. Mrs. Wesley with her daughters and Johnny Whitelamb supped there as a rule when not entertaining visitors. The Rector took his meals alone, in the parlour.

"Your father has locked her in. Until to-morrow he forbids her to have anything but bread and water," answered Mrs. Wesley.

"And she is twenty-seven years old," added Molly.

All looked at her; even Johnny Whitelamb looked, with a face as long as a fiddle. The comment was quiet, but the note of scorn in it could not be mistaken. Molly in revolt! Molly, of all persons! Molly sat trembling. She knew that among them all Johnny was her one ally—and a hopelessly distressed and ineffective one. He had turned his head quickly and leaned forward, blinking and spreading his hands — though the season was high summer — to the cold embers of the

kitchen fire, his heart torn between adoration of Hetty and the old dog-like worship of his master.

"Molly dear, she has deceived him and us all," was Mrs. Wesley's reproof, unexpectedly gentle.

"For my part," put in Nancy comfortably, "I don't suppose she would care to come down. And 'tis cosy to be back in the kitchen again, after ten days of the parlour and Mrs. Sam. Emmy agrees, I know."

But Emmy with fine composure put aside this allusion to her pet foe. "Molly and Johnny should make a match of it," she sneered. "They might set up house on their belief in Hetty, and even take her to lodge with them."

John Whitelamb sprang up as if stung; stood for a moment, still with his face averted upon the fire; then, while all stared at him, let drop the arm he had half lifted towards the mantel-shelf and relapsed into his chair. He had not uttered a sound.

Mrs. Wesley had a reproof upon her tongue, and this time a sharp one. She was prevented, however, by Molly, who rose to her feet, tottered to the door as if wounded, and escaped from the kitchen.

Molly mounted the stairs with bowed head, dragging herself at each step by the handrail. Reaching the garrets, she paused by Hetty's door to listen. No light pierced the chinks; within was silence. She crept away to her room, undressed, and lay down, sobbing quietly.

Her sobs ceased, but she could not sleep. A full moon strained its rays through the tattered curtain, and as it climbed, she watched the panel of light on the wall opposite steal down past a text above the washstand, past

the washstand itself, to the bare flooring. "God is love" said the text, and Molly had paid a pedlar twopence for it, years before, at Epworth fair — quite unaware that she was purchasing the Wesley family motto. She heard her mother and sisters below bid one another good-night and mount to their rooms. An hour later her father went his round, locking up. Then came silence.

Suddenly she sat up in her bed. She had heard — yes, surely — Hetty's voice. It seemed to come from outside, close below her window — Hetty's ordinary voice, with no distress in it, speaking some words she could not catch. She listened. Actual sound or illusion, it was not repeated. She climbed out of bed and drew the curtain aside. Bright moonlight lay spread all about the house, and, beyond, the fen-land faded away to an unseen horizon as through veils of gold and silver, asleep, no creature stirring on the face of it.

She let drop the corner of the curtain and on the instant caught it back again. A dark form, quick and noiseless, slipped past the shadow by the yard-gate. It was Rag the mastiff, left unchained at night: and as he padded across the yard in the full moonlight, Molly saw that he was wagging his tail.

She watched him to his kennel; stepped to her door, lifted the latch cautiously and stole once more along the passage to Hetty's room.

"Hetty!" she whispered. "Hetty dear! Were you calling? Is anything wrong?" She shook the door gently. No answer came. Mr. Wesley had left the key in the lock after turning it on the outside: and still

whispering to her sister, Molly wrenched it round, little by little. No one stirred below-stairs: no one answered within. She pushed the door open an inch or two, then wider, pausing as it creaked. A draught of the warm night-wind met her as she slipped into the room, and — her fingers trembling and missing their hold — the door fell-to behind her, almost with a slam.

She stood still, her heart in her mouth. In her ears the noise was loud enough to awake the house. But as the seconds dragged by and still no sound came from her father's room, "Hetty!" she whispered again.

Her eyes were on the bed as she whispered it, and in the pale light the bed was patently empty. Still she did not comprehend. Her eyes wandered from it to the open window.

When she spoke again it was with the same low whisper, but a whisper which broke as she breathed it to follow where it might not reach.

"What have they done to you? My darling, God watch over you now!"

She crept back to her room and lay shivering, waiting for the dawn.

# BOOK III

## PROLOGUE

IN a chilly dawn, high among the mountains to the north of Berar, two Britons were wandering with an Indian attendant. They came like spectres, in curling wreaths of mist that magnified their stature, and daylight cowed each with the first glimpse of his comrade's face, yellow with hunger and glassy-eyed with lack of sleep. They were, in fact, hopelessly lost. They had spent the night huddled together on a narrow ledge, listening hour by hour to the sound of water tumbling over unknown precipices; and now they moved with painful cramped limbs, yet listlessly, being past hope to escape or to see another dawn.

The elder Briton was a Scotsman, aged fifty or thereabouts, a clerk of the H.E.I.C.; the younger an Englishman barely turned twenty, an officer in the same company's service. They hailed from Surat, and had arrived in Berar on a trade mission with an escort of fifty men, of whom their present attendant, Bhagwan Dass, was the solitary survivor; and this came of believing that a "protection" from the Nizam would carry them anywhere in the Nizam's supposed dominions, whereas the *de facto* rulers of Berar were certain Mah-

ratta chieftains who collected its taxes and who had politely forwarded the mission into the fastnesses of the mountains. There, at the ripe moment, the massacre had taken place, Mr. Menzies and young Prior escaping on their hill-ponies, with Bhagwan Dass clutching at Prior's stirrup-leather. The massacre having been timed a little before nightfall, darkness helped them to get clear away: but Menzies, by over-riding his little mare, flung her, an hour later, with a broken fetlock, and Prior's pony being all but dead-beat, they abandoned the poor brutes on the mountain-side, took to their feet and stumbled on until the setting of the young moon. With the first light of dawn they had roused themselves to start anew, lingering out the agony: for the slopes below swarmed with enemies in chase, and even if a village lurked in these heights the inhabitants would give no help, being afraid of their Mahratta masters.

They had crossed a gully through which a mountain runlet descended, unrolling a ribbon of green mossy herbage on its way, and slipping out of sight over a precipice two hundred yards below. Beyond this the eye saw nothing but clouds of mist heaving and smoking to the very edge of the fall. Young Prior halted for a moment on the farther slope to take breath, and precisely at that moment something happened which he lived to relate a hundred times and always with wonder. For as his eye fell on these clouds of mist, a beam of light came travelling swiftly down the mountain and pierced them, turning them to a fierce blood-red; next, almost with an audible rush, the sun leapt into view

over the eastern spurs: and while he stared down upon the vapours writhing and bleeding under this lance-thrust of dawn — while they shook themselves loose and trailed away in wreaths of crimson and gold and violet, and deep in the chasms between them shone the plain with its tilled fields and villages — a cry from Bhagwan Dass fetched him round sharply, and he beheld, a few yards above him on the slope, a man.

The man sat, naked to the waist, at the entrance of a low cave or opening in the hillside. He seemed to be of great age, with a calm and almost unwrinkled face and gray locks falling to his shoulders, around which hung a rosary of black beads, very highly polished and flashing against the sun. From the waist down he was wrapped in a bright yellow shawl, and beside him lay a crutch and a wooden bowl heaped with rice and conserves.

Before the two Britons could master their dismay, Bhagwan Dass had run towards the cave and was imploring the holy man to give them shelter and hiding. For a while he listened merely, and his first response was to lift the bowl and invite them with a gesture to stay their hunger. Famished though they were they hesitated, and reading the reason in their eyes, he spoke for the first time.

"It will not harm you," said he in Hindustani: "and the villagers below bring me more than I can eat."

From the moment of setting eyes on him — Prior used to declare — a blessed sense of protection fell upon the party; a feeling that in the hour of extreme need God had suddenly put out a shield, under the shadow

of which they might rest in perfect confidence. And indeed, though they knew the mountain to be swarming with their enemies, they entered the cave and slept all that day like children. Whether or no meanwhile their enemies drew near they never discovered: but Prior, awaking towards nightfall, saw the hermit still seated at the entrance as they had found him, and lay for a while listening to the click of his rosary as he told bead after bead.

He must, however, have held some communication with the unseen village in the valley: for three bowls of milk and rice stood ready for them. They supped, forbearing — upon Bhagwan Dass's advice — to question him, though eager to know if he had a mind to help them further, and how he might contrive it. Until moonrise he gave no sign at all; then rising gravely, crutch and bowl in hand, stepped a pace or two beyond the entrance and whistled twice — as they supposed for a guide. But the only guides that answered were two small mountain foxes — a vixen and her half-grown cub — that came bounding around an angle of the rock and fawned about his feet while he caressed them and spoke to them softly in a tongue which none of the party understood. And so they all set out, turning their faces westward and keeping to the upper ridges; the foxes trotting always a few paces ahead and showing the way.

All that night they walked as in a dream, and came at daybreak to a ledge with a shrine upon it, and in the shrine a stone figure of a goddess, and below the ledge — perhaps half a mile below it — a village clinging

dizzily to the mountain-side. There was no food in the shrine, only a few withered wreaths of marigolds: but the holy man must have spoken to his foxes, for at dawn a priest came toiling up the slope with a filled bowl so ample that his two arms scarcely embraced it. The priest set down the food, took the hermit's blessing and departed in silence: and this was the only human creature they saw on their journey. Not for all their solicitation would the hermit join them in eating: and at this they marvelled most of all: for he had walked far and moderately fast, yet seemed to feel less fatigue than any of them. That night, as soon as the moon rose, he started afresh with the same long easy stride, and the foxes led the way as before.

The dawn rose, but this time he gave no signal for halting: and the cool of morning was almost ended when he led them out through the last broken crests of the ridge and, pointing to a broad plain at their feet, told them that henceforward they might fare in safety. A broad road traversed the plain, and beside it, some ten to twelve miles from the base of the foothills, twinkled the white walls of a rest-house.

"There," said he, pointing, "either to-day or to-morrow will pass the trader Afzul Khan: and if indeed ye come from Surat—"

His mild eyes, as he pointed, were turned upon Menzies, who broke out in amazement: "For certain Afzul Khan is known to us, as debtor should be to creditor. But how knowest *thou* either that he passes this way or that we come from Surat?"

"It is enough that I know."

"Either come with us then," Menzies pressed him, "and at the rest-house Afzul Khan shall fill thy bowl with gold-dust; or remain here, and I will send him."

"Why should he do aught so witless?"

Menzies laughed awkwardly. "Though money be useless to thee, holy man, I dare say thy villagers might be the gladder for it."

The hermit shook his head.

"Anyhow," broke in Prior, addressing Menzies in English, "we must do *something* for him, if only in justice to some folks who will be glad enough to see us back alive."

"My friend here," Menzies interpreted, "has parents living and is their only son. For me, I have a wife and three children. For their sakes, therefore —"

But the hermit put up a hand. "Something I did for their sakes, giving you back to the chains they will hang upon you. It was weakness in me, and no cause for thanks." He turned his begging bowl so that it shone in the sun: an ant clung to it, crawling on its polished side. "If ye have sons, I may live belike to see them pass my way."

"That is not likely."

"Who knows?" The old man's eyes rested on Bhagwan Dass. "Unlikelier things have befallen me while I sat yonder. See —" he turned the bowl in his hand and nodded towards the ant running hither and thither upon it. "What happens to him that would not likewise happen if he stood still?"

"There is food at the rest-house," Menzies persisted; "but I take it you can find food on your way back, even though since starting we have seen none pass your lips: and that is two days."

"It will be yet two days before I feast again: for I drink not save of the spring by which you found me, and I eat no food the taste of which I cannot wash from me in its water."

Menzies and Prior eyed one another. "Cracked as an old bell!" said the younger man in English, and laughed.

"Is it a vow?" Menzies asked.

"It is a vow."

"But tell me," put in Prior, "does the water of your spring differ from that of a thousand others on these hills?"

"The younger sahib," answered the hermit, "understands not the meaning of a vow; which a man makes to his own hurt, perhaps, or to the hurt of another, or it may even be quite foolishly; but thereby he stablishes his life, while the days of other men go by in a flux of business. As for the water of my hillside," he went on with a sharp change of voice and speaking, to their amazement, in English, "have not your countrymen, O sahibs, their particular springs? Churchman and Dissenter, Presbyterian and Baptist—count they not every Jordan above Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus?"

He turned and walked swiftly from them, mounting the slope with swift loose strides. But while they stared, Bhagwan Dass broke from them, and ran in pursuit.

"Not without thy blessing! O Annesley sahib, go not before thou hast blessed me!"

Two days later, at sunset, a child watching a little below the hermit's spring saw him limp back to it and drink and seat himself again at the entrance of the cave; and pelted down to the village with the news. And the hill-people, who had supposed him gone for ever, swarmed up and about the cave to assure themselves.

"Alas!" said the holy man, gazing out upon the twilight when at length all had departed, leaving him in peace. "Cannot a man be anywhere alone with God? And yet," he added, "I was something wistful for their love."

# I

*"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him: neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us. O Lord, correct me, but with judgement; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."*

THE voice travelled down the great nave of Lincoln Cathedral, and, as it came, the few morning worshippers — it was a week-day — inclined their faces upwards: for it seemed to pause and float overhead and again be carried forward by its own impulse, a pure column of sound wavering awhile before it broke and spread and dissolved into whispers among the multitudinous arches. To a woman still kneeling by a pillar close within the western doorway it was as the voice of a seraph speaking with the dawn, fresh from his night-watch over earth. She had been kneeling for minutes, and still knelt, but she could not pray. She had no business to be there. To her the sentences carried no message; but the voice smiting, pure and cold, across the hot confusion in her brain, steadied her while it terrified.

Yet she knew the voice well enough. It was but John Romley's. The Dean and Chapter wanted a precentor, and among a score of candidates had selected Romley and two others for further trial. This was his chance and he was using it; making the most of it, too, to the mingled

admiration and disgust of his rivals listening in the choir beside him.

And she had dressed early and climbed to the cathedral, not to pray, but to seek Romley because she had instant need of him; because, though she respected his character very little, he was the one man in the world who could help her. She had missed him at the door: entering, she learned from a verger that he was already robing. Then the great organ sounded, and from habit she dropped on her knees.

John Romley, unseen in the choir, was something very different from John Romley in private life with his loose face and flabby handshake. Old Mr. Wesley had once dismissed him contemptuously as *vox et praeterea nihil:* but disembodied thus, almost a thing celestial, yet subtly recalling home to her and ties renounced, the voice shook Hetty's soul. For it came on her as the second shock of an ambush. She had climbed to the cathedral with but half of her senses awake, drowsed by love, by the long ride in the languorous night wind, by the exhaustion of a long struggle ended, by her wondering helplessness on arriving — the chill sunlight, the deserted street, the strange voice behind the lodging-house door, the unfamiliar passage and stairs. She had lived a lifetime in those hours, and for the while Wroote Parsonage lay remote as a painful daily round from the dream which follows it. Only the practical instinct, as it were a nerve in the centre of her brain, awake and refusing to be drugged, had kept sounding its alarm to rise and seek Romley; and though at length she obeyed in a panic,

she went as one walking in sleep. The front of the cathedral, as she came beneath its shadow, overhung her as a phantom drawn upon the morning sky, its tall towers unsubstantial, trembling against the light, but harmless even should they fall upon her. She entered as one might pass through a paper screen.

The first shock came upon her then. She passed not out of sunlight into sunlight, but out of sunlight into a vast far-reaching, high-arching gloom, which was another world and another life; the solemn twilight which her upbringing had taught her to associate with God. Once before in her life, and once only, she had stood within the minster — on her confirmation day, when she had entered with her hand in her mother's. Her eyes sought and found the very place where she had sat then among the crowd of girl-candidates, and a ghost in a white frock sat there still with bowed head. She remembered the very texture and scent of that white frock: they came back with the awe, the fervour, the passionate desire to be good, and these memories cried all in her ears, "What have you to do with that child? Which of you is Hetty? You cannot both be real."

They sang in her ears while she questioned the verger about Romley. He had to repeat his answers before she thanked him and turned towards one of the lowest seats. She did not repent: she was not thinking of repentance. She loved, she had given all for love, and life was fuller of beautifying joy than ever it had been even on that day of confirmation: but beneath the joy awoke a small ache, and with the ache a certain knowledge that she might

never sit beside the child in white, never so close as to touch her frock; that their places in this building, God's habitation, were eternally separate.

Then the organ ceased, and the voice began to speak. And the voice uttered promise of pardon, but Hetty heard nothing of the words—only the notes.

"*And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.*"

Less terrible this voice was; a seraph's rather, at the lodge-gate, welcoming the morn. Yet Hetty crouched by her pillar, afraid. For the day he welcomed was not her day, the worship he offered was not her worship; for her a sword lay across the gate.

Her terror passed, and she straightened herself. After all, she did not repent. Why should she repent? She was loved; she loved in return, utterly and without guile, with a love which, centred upon one, yet embraced all living creatures. Nay, it embraced Heaven, if Heaven would accept it. And why not?

"*Wherefore let us beseech him,*" said the voice, "*to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy. . . .*"

"Pure and holy"—but she desired no less, and out of her love. She wanted to be friends with all at home, to go to them fearlessly and make them understand her as she understood them, and to be good all the days

of her life. "True repentance"? Why repent? . . . Ah, yes, of course: but God was no haggler over hours. In an hour or two. . . . "That those things may please him which we do at this present —" She caught at her heart now as the terror — a practical terror this time — returned upon it. At all costs she must find John Romley after service, though indeed there was little danger of missing him, for he, no doubt, would be seeking her.

Her mind was clear now.

She lay in wait for him as he stepped out under the great porch, with a clean surplice on his arm. He paused there with a smile on his face, glanced up at the blue sky, clapped on his hat, and descended the steps gaily, whistling a phrase from the *Venite exultemus;* too far preoccupied to recognize Hetty, until she stepped forward and almost laid a hand on his arm.

"Miss Mehetabel!"

Plainly, then, he was not seeking her.

"You in Lincoln? This is a surprise — a pleasant surprise, indeed!"

"But I came in search of you. I have been waiting —" She nodded her head towards the porch.

"Eh? You heard? 'Twas not altogether a breakdown, I hope. You must allow for some nervousness — did you detect it? No? Well, I don't mind owning to you I was nervous as a cat: but there, if you didn't detect it I shall flatter myself I did passably." He laughed, evidently on the best terms with himself. His breath smelt of beer. "The Rector is with you, of course?"

"My father? But, Mr. Romley, I don't think you understand — "

"I shall do myself the pleasure of calling on him this morning. Nothing could have happened better, and I'm in luck's way to-day, for certain. It seems the Dean and Chapter require a certificate from him — a testimonial — just a line or two, to say that I'm a decent respectable fellow. We have not been friends of late — I hope Miss Patty keeps pretty well, by the way — but he won't deny me that small favour. You were not seeking me on her account?" he added, by an afterthought.

"Patty?" She uttered her sister's name to gain time, for in truth she was bewildered, alarmed.

He nodded. "We are not allowed to correspond, as you know. But she must keep up her heart: your father will come round when he sees me precentor. 'Tis a good opening. We must allow for the Rector's crotchets (you'll excuse me, I feel sure): but give him time, I say — give him time, and he'll come round right and tight."

"My father is not with me. Oh, Mr. Romley, you have heard, surely? I was told — But there, you have the license."

"The license? What license?" He stared at her.

Her heart sank. Here was some horrible mistake. She bethought herself of his careless habits, which indeed were notorious enough in and about Wroote and Epworth. "It must be among your letters — have you neglected them lately? Ah, think — think, my friend: for to me this means all the world!"

"Upon my word of honour, Miss Hetty, I don't understand one word you're saying. Come, let us have it clear. What brings you to Lincoln? The Rector is not with you. Who then?"

"We came here last night—early this morning, rather—"

"'We'?"

"I have left home. You know what we intended? But my father locked me up. I had tried to be open with him, and he would listen to nothing. So—as everything was ready—and you here with the license—"

John Romley stepped back a pace. It is doubtful if he heard the last words. His eyes were round in his head.

"You are here—with—*him!*" He gasped it in an incredulous whisper. For a moment in her earnestness she met his stare. Then her hands went up to her face. "You? You?" he repeated slowly. His eyes shrank from her face and wandered helplessly over the smoke, over the red roofs of the town below them.

"But we came to get married!" She plucked her hands away from her face and stepped close to him, forcing his reluctant eyes to meet hers. Her cheeks flamed: he groaned at the sight of her beauty. "But we came to get married! John! there is nothing—surely nothing? that with your help cannot be set right. Ah, I forget—by marrying us you will offend father, and you find now that you want this favour of him. John, it cannot be *that*—you cannot be playing so cruel a trick for

*that*—and after your promise? Forgive me if I am selfish: but think what I am fighting for!"

"It will cost me the precentorship," answered he slowly, "but I hadn't given a thought to that."

"It shall cost you nothing of the kind. After all, father is juster to others than to me. I will write—we will both write: I will tell him what you risked to save his daughter. Or, stay: any clergyman will do, will he not? We need only the license. You shall risk nothing: give me only the license and I will run and find one."

"Dear Miss Hetty, I made no promise. I have no license. None has reached me, nor word of one."

"Then *he* must have it! He told me—that is, I understood—" She broke off with a laugh most pitiful in John's ears, though it seemed to reassure her. "But how foolish of me! Of *course* he must have it. And you will come with me, at once? At the least you are willing to come?"

"Surely I will come." John's face was gloomy. "Where are the lodgings?"

"I cannot tell you the name of the street, but I can find them. John, you are an angel! And afterwards I will sit and tell you about Patty to your heart's content. We can be married in the parlour, I suppose? Or must it be in church? I had rather—far rather—it were in church if you could manage that for us: but not to lose time. Perhaps we can find a church later in the day and get permission to go through the service again. I daresay, though, he has it all arranged—he said I might leave it

to him. You won't tell him, John, what a fright I have given myself?"

So her tongue ran on as they descended the hill together. John Romley walked beside her stupidly, wondering if she were in truth reassured or chattering thus to keep up her hopes. They might, after all, be justified: but his forebodings weighed on his tongue. Also the shock had stunned him and all his wits seemed to be buzzing loose in his head.

They did not notice, although they passed it close, a certain signboard over a low-browed shop halfway down the street. Afterwards Hetty remembered passing the shop, and that its one window was caked with mud and grimed with dust on top of the mud. She did not see a broad-shouldered man in a dirty baize apron seated at his work-bench behind the pane. Nor after passing the shop did she turn her head: but walked on unaware of an ill-shaven face thrust out of its doorway and staring after her.

William Wright sat at his bench that morning, fitting a leather washer in a leaky brass tap. In the darkest corner at the back of the shop his father — a peevish old man, well past seventy — stooped over a desk, engaged as usual in calculating his book-debts, an occupation which brought him no comfort but merely ingrained his bad opinion of mankind. Having drunk his trade into a decline, and being now superannuated, he nagged over his ledgers from morning to night and snatched a fearful joy in goading William to the last limit of for-

bearance. William, who had made himself responsible for the old man's debts, endured him on the whole very creditably. "Here's a bad 'un," "Here's a bad 'un," piped the voice from time to time.

William trimmed away at his washer.

"Hello! Who's been putting this in the ledger?" The old man held up a thin strip of leather. "Oh, Willum, here's a very bad 'un!"

"What name?" asked William indifferently, without turning his head.

"Wesley, Reverend Samuel—Wroote and Epworth Rectory—twelve-seventeen-six. Two years owing, and not a stiver on account. Oh, a poisonous bad 'un!"

"That's all right."

"Not a stiver on account!"

"All right, I tell you. There won't be any paying on account with that bill: it'll be all or nothing. All, perhaps; and, if so, something more than all"—he laid down his clasp-knife and almost involuntarily put a hand up to his cheek—"but nothing, most like. I put that slip of leather there to remind me, but I don't need it. 'Twelve-seventeen-six'—better scratch it off."

"'Scratch it off'? Scratch off twelve-seventeen-six!" Old Wright spun round on his stool. But William sat gazing out of window. He had picked up his knife again, but did not at once resume work.

The next thing old Wright heard was the clatter of a knife on the bench. William sprang up as it dropped, crept swiftly to the shop-door, and stood there craning his head into the street and fumbling with his apron.

"What's the matter? Cut yourself? It don't want a doctor, do it?"

William did not answer: suddenly he plucked off his apron, flung it backwards into the shop, and disappeared into the street. The old man tottered forward, picked it off the floor and stood examining it, his mouth opening and shutting like a fish's.

## II

"'BROUGHT him'! Who told you to bring him?" Hetty's lover faced her across the round table in the lodging-house parlour. The table was spread for two, and Hetty's knife and plate stood ready for her with a covered dish before it. He had breakfasted, and their entrance surprised him with an empty pewter in his hand, his chair thrust back sideways from the table, his legs extended towards the empty fireplace, and his eyes bent on his handsome calves with a somewhat moody frown.

"Who told you to bring him?"

John Romley stood in the doorway behind Hetty's shoulder. She turned to him bravely and quietly, albeit with the scare in her face.

"I ought not to have brought you in like this. You will not mind waiting outside, will you? — a minute only — while I explain — "

Romley bent his head and walked out, closing the door.

"Dear," — Hetty turned, — "you must forgive me, but I could not rest until I had brought him."

He had risen, and stood now with his face averted, gazing out of the window where a row of clouts and linen garments on a clothes-line blocked the view of an untidy back yard. He had known that this moment

must come, but not that it would take him so soon and at unawares. He let his anger rise while he considered what to answer; for a man in the wrong will miss no excuse for losing his temper.

Hetty waited for a moment, then went on — "And I thought you had given him the license: that is what made me so anxious to find —"

A noise in the passage cut short her excuses: a woman's laugh. Hetty knew of two women only in the house — the landlady who had opened the door last night and a pert-looking slatternly servant she had passed at the foot of the stairs on her way to the cathedral. She could not tell to which of these the voice belonged: but the laugh and the jest it followed — though she had not caught it — were plainly at John Romley's expense, and the laugh was horrible.

It rang on her ears like a street-door bell. It seemed to tear down the mystery of the house and scream out its secret. The young man at the window turned against his will and met Hetty's eyes: they were strained and staring.

She put out her hand. "Where is the license?" she asked. "Give it to me."

The change in her voice and manner confused him. "My dear child, don't be silly," he blundered.

"Give me the license."

"Tut, tut — let us understand one another like sensible folks. You must not treat me like a boy, to be bounced in this fashion by John Romley." He began to whip up his temper again. "Nasty tippling parson! I've more than a mind to kick him into the street."

Her eyes widened on his with growing knowledge, growing pain: but faith lived in them yet.

"I thought you had given him the license, to be ready for us. Yes, yes—you did say it!" Her hand went up to her bosom for his last letter, which she had worn there until last night. Then she remembered: she had left it upstairs. Having him, she had no more need to wear it.

He read the gesture. "You are right, dear, and I forgot. I *did* say so, because I believed by the time the words reached you—or thereabouts, at any rate—"

"Then *you* have it. Give it to me, please," she commanded.

He stepped to the fireplace, unable to meet her eye. "You hurried me," he muttered: "there was not time."

For a moment she spread out both hands as one groping in the dark: then the veil fell from her eyes and she saw. The truth spoke to her senses first—in the sordid disarray of breakfast, in the fusty smell of the room with its soiled curtains, its fly-blown mirror, its outlook on the blank court. A whiff of air crept in at the open window—flat, with a scullery odour which sickened her soul. In her ears rang the laugh of the woman in the passage.

"What have you done? What have you done to me?"

She crouched, shivering, like some beautiful wild creature entrapped. He faced her again. Her eyes were on his, but fastened there now by a shrinking terror.

"Hetty!"

She put up a hand and turned her face to the wall, as if to shut out him and the light. He stepped to her, caught her by the wrist and forced her round towards him. At

the first touch he felt her wince. So will you see a young she-panther wince and cower from her tamer's whip.

Yet, although she shuddered, she could not drag her hand away. He was her tamer now: and as he spoke soothingly and she grew quieter, a new faith awoke in her, yet a faith as old as woman; the false imperishable faith that by giving all she binds a man as he has bound her.

With a cry she let her brow sink till it touched his breast. Then, straightening herself, she gripped him by both shoulders and stared close into his eyes — clinging to him as she had clung that evening on the frozen canal, but with a face how different!

"But you mean no harm? You told me a falsehood" — here he blinked, but she went on, her eyes devouring his — "but you told it in kindness? Say you mean no harm to me — you will get this license soon. How soon? Do not be angry — ah, see how I humble myself to you! You mean honestly: yes, yes, but say it! How soon?"

"Hetty, I'll be honest with you. One cannot get a license in a day."

"And I will be patient — so patient! Only we must leave this horrible house: you must find me a lodging where I can be alone."

"Why, what's the matter with this house?" He tried a laugh, and the result betrayed him.

Her body stiffened again. "When did you apply for the license?" she demanded. "How long since?"

He tried to shuffle. "But answer me!" she insisted, thrusting him away. And then, after a pause and very slowly, "You have not applied at all," she said. "You are

lying again . . . God forgive you." She drew herself up and for an instant he thought she was going to strike him; but she only shivered. "I must go home."

"Home!" he echoed.

"And whither but home?" — with a loathing look around her.

"You will not dare."

In all this pitiful scene was nothing so pitiful as the pride in which she drew herself up and towered over the man who had abased her. Yet her voice was quiet. "That you cannot understand is worst of all. I feared sin too little: but I can face the consequences. I fear them less than — than — "

A look around her completed the sentence eloquently enough. As she stood with her hand on the door-latch that look travelled around the sordid room and rested finally on him as a piece of it. Then the latch clicked, and she was gone.

She stood in the passage by the foot of the staircase. Halfway up the servant girl was stooping over a stair-rod, pretending to clean it. Hetty's wits were clear. She reflected a moment, and mounted steadily to her room, crammed her poor trifles into her satchel, and came down again with a face of ice.

The girl drew aside, watching her intently. But — on a sudden impulse — "Miss ——" she said.

"I beg your pardon!" Hetty paused.

"I wouldn't be in a hurry, miss. You can master him, if you try — you and the parson: and the worst of 'em's better than none. And you that pretty, too!"

"I don't understand you," answered Hetty coldly, and passed on.

John Romley was patrolling the pavement outside. She forced up a smile to meet him. "There has been some difficulty with the license," said she, and marvelled at her own calmness. "I am sorry, John, to have brought you here for nothing. He hid it from me — in kindness: but meanwhile I am going back." With this brave falsehood she turned to leave him, knowing that he believed it as little as she.

He too marvelled. "Is it necessary to go back?"

"It is necessary."

"Then let me find you some conveyance." But he saw that she wished only to be rid of him, and so shook hands and watched her down the street.

"The infernal hound!" he said to himself, and as she passed out of sight turned to the lodging-house door and entered without knocking.

He emerged, twenty minutes later, with his white bands twisted, his hat awry, and a smear of blood on the surplice he carried — altogether a very unclerical-looking figure. On the way back to his inn he kept looking at his cut knuckles, and, arriving, called for a noggin of brandy. By midday he was drunk, and at one o'clock he was due to appear at the Chapter House. The hour struck: but John Romley sat on in the coffee-room, staring stupidly at his knuckles.

And all this while in the lodging-house parlour sat or paced the man who has no name in this book. He also was drinking: but the brandy-and-water, though he

gulped it fiercely, neither unsteadied his legs nor confused his brain. Only it deadened by degrees the ruddy colour in his face to a gray shining pallor, showing up one angry spot on the cheek-bone. Though he frowned as he paced and muttered now and again to himself, he was not thinking of John Romley.

Some men are born to be the curse of women and, through women, of the world. Despicable in themselves they inherit a dreadful secret before which, as in a fortress betrayed to a false password, the proudest virtue hauls down its flag and, kneeling, proffers its keys. Doubtless they move under fate to an end appointed, though to us they appear but as sightseers, obscure and irresponsible, who passing through a temple defile its holies and go their casual ways. We wonder that this should be. But so it is, and such was this man. Let his name perish.

## III

LATE that evening and a little after moonrise, Johnny Whitelamb, going out to the woodstack for a faggot, stood still for a moment at sight of a figure half-blotted in the shadow.

"Miss Hetty — oh, Miss Hetty!" he called softly.

Hetty did not run; but as he stepped to her, let him take her hands and lifted her face to the moonlight.

"What are they doing?" she whispered.

Johnny was never eloquent. "They are sitting by the fire, just as usual," he answered her, but his voice shook over the words.

"Just as usual?" she echoed dully. "Mother and the girls, you mean?"

"Yes: the Rector is in his study. I have not seen him to-day: only the mistress has seen him." He paused: Hetty shivered. She was weak and woefully tired: for, excepting a lift at Marton and a second in a wagon from Gainsborough to Haxey, she had walked from Lincoln and had been walking all day.

"I cannot tell what mistress thinks," Johnny went on: "the others talk to each other — a word now and then — but she sits looking at the fire and says nothing. I think she means to sit up late to-night. Else why did she send me out for another faggot?" he asked, in his simple,

puzzled way. "But oh, Miss Hetty, she will be glad you've come back, and now we can be all happy again!"

She waved a hand feebly. "Fetch Molly to me."

By the pallor of her brow in the moonlight he made sure she was near to fainting: and, indeed, she was not far from it. He ran and burst in at the kitchen-door impetuously; but meeting the eyes of the family, surprised — as well they might be — by the violence of his entry and his scared face, he became suddenly and absurdly diplomatic, crossed to Molly and whispered, as Mrs. Wesley turned her eyes from the fire.

"But where is the faggot?" she demanded.

"I — I forgot it," stammered Johnny and was for returning to fetch it. Molly rose.

"Hetty is outside," she announced.

For a second or two there was silence. Mrs. Wesley turned to her crippled daughter. "You had best bring her in. The rest of you, go to bed."

They obeyed at once and in silence. Johnny, too, stole off to his mattress in the glass-doored cupboard under the stairs.

When Molly returned, leading in her sister, Mrs. Wesley was seated by the fire alone. Mother and daughter looked into each other's eyes. In silence Hetty stepped forward and dropped into the chair a minute ago vacated by Kezzy. But for the ticking of the tall clock there was no sound in the kitchen.

Mrs. Wesley read Hetty's eyes; read the truth in them, and something else which tied her tongue. She made no offer to rise and kiss her.

"You are hungry?" she asked after a while, and Molly pushed forward a plate of biscuits. Hetty ate ravenously for a minute (for twenty-four hours not a morsel of food had passed her lips and she had walked close on thirty miles) and then pushed away the plate in disgust. Her eyes still sought her mother's; they neither pleaded nor reproached.

Yet Mrs. Wesley spoke, when next she spoke, as if choosing to answer a plea. "Your father does not know of your return. You may sleep with Molly to-night." She bent over the hearth and raked its embers together. Molly laid a hand lightly on Hetty's shoulder, then slipped it under the crook of her arm, and lifted and led her from the kitchen.

Hetty went unresisting. When they reached the bedroom she halted and stared around as one who had lost her bearings. She winced once and shook as Molly's gentle fingers began to unfasten her bodice, but afterwards stood quite passive and suffered herself to be undressed as a little child. Molly unlaced her shoes. Molly brought cool water in a basin, bathed her face and hands, braided her hair—the masses of red-brown hair she had been used to admire and caress, passing a hand over them as tenderly as of old; then knelt and washed the tired feet, and wiped them, feeling the arch of the instep with her bare hands and chafing them to make sure they were dry—so cold they were.

"Won't you say your prayers, dear?"

Hetty shook her head.

"Then at least you shall kneel by me, and I will pray for both."

Molly's arm was about her. She obeyed and with her waist so encircled knelt by the bed. And twice Molly, not interrupting her prayer, pressed the waist close to her side, and once lifted her lips and kissed the side of the brow.

They arose at length, the one confirmed now and made almost fearless by saintliness and love. But the other, creeping first into the narrow bed, shrank away towards the wall and lay with her eyes fixed on it and staring.

"No, darling," whispered Molly; "when you were strong and I was weak you used to comfort me. I am the strong one now, and you shall not escape me so!"

And so it was. Her feeble arms had suddenly become strong. They slid, the one beneath Hetty's shoulder, the other across and below her bosom, and straining, not to be denied, they forced her round. Wide-eyed still, Hetty gazed up into eyes dark in the moonlight, but conquering her, piercing through all secrets. Her own brimmed suddenly with tears and she lay quiet, her soul naked beneath Molly's soul.

"Ay, let them come—let them come while I hold you!"

While Hetty lay, neither winking nor moving, the big drops overbrimmed at the corners of each eye and trickled on the pillow. As one fell, another gathered. Silent, unchecked, they flowed, and Molly bent and watched them flowing.

"A little while — a little while!" moaned Hetty.

"I will hold you so for ever."

"No — yet a little while, though you know not what you are holding."

"Were it a thousand times worse than I think, I am holding my sister."

"To-morrow — "

"We will bear it together." Molly smiled, but very faintly. "You forget that I shall never marry — that I shall always need you to care for. All my life till now you have protected me: now I shall pay back what I owe."

"Ah, you think I fear father? Molly, I do not fear father at all. I fear myself — what I am." And still staring up Hetty whispered a horrible word.

"Oh hush, hush!" Molly laid a swift hand over her lips, and for a while there was silence in the room.

"So make the most of me now," Hetty murmured, "while you have me to hold, dear: for what I am is not mine to give."

"Hetty!" Molly drew back. "You will not go — to *him* — again?"

"If he will marry me. I do not think he will, dear; I do not think he has the courage. But if he calls me, I will go humbly, thankfully."

"And if not — "

Hetty turned her face aside: but after a moment she looked up, staring, as before. There were no tears in her eyes now.

"I do not know." She was silent awhile, then went on slowly. "But if any honest man will have me, I vow before God to marry him. Yes, and I would take his hand and bless it for so much honour, were he the lowest hind in the fields."

Molly choked down a cry and held her breath. Her arms slipped from around the dear body she could have saved from fire, from drowning, from anything but this. This pair had loved and honoured each other from babyhood: the heart of each had been a shrine for the other, daily decked with pretty thoughts as a shrine with flowers in season. All that was best they had brought each other: how much at need they were ready to give God alone knew. And now, by the law which in Eden divided woman from man, the basest stranger among the millions of men held the power denied to Molly, the only salvation for Hetty's need. "What I am is not mine to give"—for a minute Molly bowed over her sister, helpless.

"But no," she cried suddenly, "that is wicked! It would be a thousand times worse than the other, however bad. You shall take no such oath! You did not know what it meant. Hetty, Hetty, take it back!"

She flung herself forward sobbing.

"I have said it," Hetty answered quietly. The two lay shuddering, breast to breast.

Downstairs a sad-eyed woman sat over the dead fire. She heard a chair pushed back in the next room, and trembled. By-and-by she heard her husband trying the

bolts of the doors and window-shutters. He looked into the kitchen and, finding her there seated with the lamp beside her, withdrew without a word. She had not raised her head. His footsteps went up the stairs slowly.

For another hour, almost, she sat on, staring at the gray ashes: then took the lamp and went shivering to her room.

## IV

THE worst (or perhaps the best) of a temper so choleric as Mr. Wesley's is that by constant daily expenditure on trifles it fatigues itself, and is apt to betray its possessor by an unexpected lassitude when a really serious occasion calls. A temper thoroughly cruel (which his was not) steadily increases its appetite: but a temper less than cruel, or cruel only by accident, will run itself to a standstill and either cry for a strong whip or yield to the temptation to defer the crisis.

On this Mrs. Wesley was building when she broke to her husband the news of Hetty's return. He lifted himself in his chair, clutching its arms. His face was gray with spent passion.

"Where is she?"

"She has gone for a walk, alone," she answered. She had, in truth, packed Hetty off and watched her across the yard before venturing to her husband's door.

"So best." He dropped back in his chair with a sigh that was more than half composed of relief. "So best, perhaps. I will speak to her later."

He looked at his wife with hopeless inquiry. She bowed her head for sign that it was indeed hopeless.

Now Molly had sought her mother early and spoken up. But Molly (who intended nothing so little) had not

only made herself felt, for the first time in her life, as a person to be reckoned with, but had also done the most fatally foolish thing in her life by winding up with: "And we—you and father and all of us, but father especially—have driven her to it! God knows to what you will drive her yet: for she has taken an oath under heaven to marry the first man who offers, and she is capable of it, if you will not be sensible."

—Which was just the last thing Hetty would have forbidden her to tell, yet just the last thing Hetty would have told, had she been pleading for Molly. For Hetty had long since gauged her mother and knew that, while her instinct for her sons' interests was well-nigh impeccable, on any question that concerned her daughters she would blunder nine times out of ten.

So now Mrs. Wesley, meaning no harm and foreseeing none, answered her husband gravely, "She has told me nothing. But she swears she will marry the first man who offers."

The Rector shut his mouth firmly. "That decides it," he answered. "Has she gone in search of the fool?"

But this was merely a cry of bitterness. As Mrs. Wesley stole from the room, he opened a drawer in his table, pulled out some sheets of manuscript, and gazed at them for a while without fixing his thoughts. He seldom considered his daughters. Women had their place in the world: that place was to obey and bear children: to carry on the line for men. It was a father's duty to take care that their husbands should be good men, worthy of the admixture of good blood. The family

which yielded its daughters to this office yielded them as its surplus. They did not carry on its name, which depended on its sons. . . . He had three sons: but of all his daughters Hetty had come nearest to claim a son's esteem. Something masculine in her mind had encouraged him to teach her Latin and Greek. It had been an experiment, half seriously undertaken; it had come to be seriously pursued. Not even John had brought so flexible a sense of language. In accuracy she could not compare with John, nor in that masculine apprehension which seizes on logic even in the rudiments of grammar. Mr. Wesley — a poet himself, though by no means a great one — had sometimes found John too pragmatical in demanding reasons for this and that. "Child," he had once protested, "you think to carry everything by dint of argument; but you will find how little is ever done in the world by close reasoning": and, turning to his wife in a pet, "I profess, sweetheart, I think our Jack would not attend to the most pressing necessities of nature unless he could give a reason for it." To Hetty, on the other hand, beauty — beauty in language, in music, in all forms of art, no less than the beauty of a spring day — was an ultimate thing and lay beyond questions: and Mr. Wesley, though as a divine he checked her somewhat pagan impulses and recalled them to give account of their ground of choice, as a scholar could not help admiring them. For they seldom led her to choose wrongly. In Hetty dwelt something of the Attic instinct which, in days of literary artifice and literary fashions from which she could not wholly escape, kept her taste fresh and

guided her at once to browse on what was natural and health-giving and to reject with delicate disgust what was rank and overblown. Himself a sardonic humorist, he could enjoy the bubbling mirth with which she discovered comedy in the objects of their common derision. Himself a hoplite in study, laborious, without sense of proportion, he could look on and smile while she, a woman, walked more nimbly, picking and choosing as she went.

The manuscript he held was a poem of hers, scored with additions and alterations of his own, by which (though mistakenly) he believed he had improved it: a song of praise put in the mouth of a disciple of Plato: its name, "Eupolis, his Hymn to the Creator." As he turned the pages, his eyes paused and fastened themselves on a passage here and there:

"Sole from sole Thou mak'st the sun
On his burning axles run:
The stars like dust around him fly,
And strew the area of the sky:
He drives so swift his race above,
Mortals can't perceive him move:
So smooth his course, oblique or straight,
Olympus shakes not with his weight.
As the Queen of solemn Night
Fills at his vase her orb of light —
Imparted lustre — thus we see
The solar virtue shines by Thee.
ΕΙΡΕΣΙΩΝΗ! we'll no more
For its fancied aid implore,
Since bright *oil* and *wool* and *wine*
And life-sustaining *bread* are Thine;
*Wine* that sprightly mirth supplies,
Noble wine for sacrifice. . . ."

The verses, though he repeated them, had no meaning for him. He remembered her sitting at the table by the window (now surrendered to Johnny Whitelamb) and transcribing them into a fair copy, sitting with head bent and the sunlight playing on her red-brown hair: he remembered her standing by his chair with a flushed face, waiting for his verdict. But though his memory retained these visions, they carried no sentiment. He only thought of the young, almost boyish, promise in the lines:

"Omen, monster, prodigy!
Or nothing is, or Jove, from thee.
Whether various Nature's play,
Or she, renversed, thy will obey,
And to rebel man declare
Famine, plague or wasteful war . . .
No evil can from Thee proceed;
'Tis only suffered, not decreed. . . ."

He gazed from the careful handwriting to the horizon beyond his window. Why had he fished out the poem from its drawer? She, the writer, — his child, — was a wanton.

## V

HETTY had found a patch of ragged turf and mallow where the woodstack hid her from the parsonage windows; and sat there in the morning sun — unconsciously, as usual, courting its full rays. Between her and the stack the ground was bare, strewn with straw and broken twigs. She supposed that her father would send for her soon: but she was preparing no defence, no excuses. She hoped, indeed, that the interview would be short, but simply because the account she must render to him seemed trivial beside that which she must render to herself. Her eyes watched the hens as they scratched pits in the warm dust, snuggled down and adjusted and readjusted their wing-feathers. But her brain was busied over and over with the same thought — "I am now a bad woman. Is there yet any way for me to be good?"

Yet her wits were alert enough. She heard her father's footstep on the path twenty yards away, guessed the moment which would bring him into sight of her. Though she did not look up, she knew that he had come to a halt. She waited. He turned and walked slowly away. She knew why he had faltered. Her mind ran back to the problem. "I am a bad woman. Is there any way for me to be good?"

Half an hour passed. Emilia came round the rick,

talking to herself, holding a wooden bowl from which she had been feeding the chickens. She came upon Hetty unawares and stood still, with a face at first confused, but gradually hardening.

"Sit down, Emmy." Hetty pointed to a faggot lying a few paces off.

Emilia hesitated.

"You may sit down: near enough to listen —

"'Here I and sorrows sit;
Here is my throne, let Emmy bow to it.'

You were reciting as you came along." She raised her eyes with a grave smile. "Shall I tell you your secret?"

"What secret?" asked Emilia, reddening in spite of herself.

"Oh, I have known it a long while. But if you want me to whisper it, you must come closer. Nay, my dear, I know very little of the stage — perhaps as little as you: but, from what I have read, it will bring you close to creatures worse than I."

Emilia was scared now. "Who told you? Have you heard from Jacky? — no, he couldn't because —"

"— Because you never told him, although you may have hinted at it. And if you told him, he would laugh and call it the ambition of a girl who knows nothing of the world."

"I will not starve here. And now that this — this disgrace —"

"Father would think it no less disgrace to see you an actress. Listen: a little while ago he came this way,

meaning to curse me, but he turned back and did not. And now you come, and are confused, and I read you just as plainly. While my wits are so clear I want to say one or two things to you. Yesterday — only yesterday — I left home for ever, and here I am back again. I have been wicked, you say, and there is nothing sinful in becoming an actress. Perhaps not: yet I am sure father would think it sinful—even more selfishly sinful than my fault, because it would hurt the careers of Jacky and Charles; and that, as you know, he would never forgive."

"Who are you, to be lecturing me?"

"I am your sister, who has done wrong: I have tasted bitter fruit and must go eating it all my life. But it is fruit of knowledge — ah, listen, Emmy! If you do this and become famous, the greater your fame, the greater the injury; or so father would hold it, and perhaps our brothers too. Hetty can be hidden and forgotten in a far country parish. But can Jacky become a bishop, having for a sister a famous actress?"

"You are sudden in this thought for your brothers."

"It is not of them I am thinking. I say that if you succeed you will lose father's forgiveness and always carry with you this sorrowful knowledge. Yet I would bid you go and do it: for to be great is worth much cost of sorrow, and sorrow might even increase your greatness. But have you that strength? And if you should not succeed? — We know nothing of the world: all our thoughts of it come out of books and dreaming. You imagine yourself treading the boards and holding all hearts captive with your voice. So I used to

imagine myself slaying dragons. So, only yesterday, I believed — "

She sat erect with a shiver. "To wake and find all your dreams changed to squalor, and for you no turning back! Have you the strength, Emmy — to go forward and change that squalor back again by sheer force into beautiful dreams? Have you the strength?" She gazed at Emilia and added musingly, "No, you have not the strength. You will stay on here in the cage, an obedient woman, your talent repressed to feed the future of those grand brothers of ours who take all we give, yet cannot help us one whit. They take it innocently; they do not know; and they are dear good fellows. But they cannot help. I only have done what may injure them — though I do not think it will: and when father came along the path just now, he was thinking of them rather than of me — of me only as I might injure them."

She was right indeed. Mr. Wesley had left the house thinking of her: but a few steps had called up the faces of his sons, and by habit, since he thought of them always on his walks. His studies put aside, to think of them was his recreation. Coming upon Hetty, he had felt himself taken at unawares, and retreated.

"— And when he turned away," Hetty went on, "I understood. And I felt sorry for him, because all of a sudden it came to me that he may be wiser than any of us, and one day it will be made plain to us, what we have helped to do — or to spoil."

"Here is someone you had better be sorry for," said Emilia, glancing along the path at the sound of footsteps

and catching sight of Nancy. "She has made up her mind that John Lambert will have no more to do with us now; and the wedding not a month away!"

Sure enough, Nancy's eyes were red, and she gazed at Hetty less with reprobation than with lugubrious reproach.

"Then she knows less of John Lambert than I do," said Hetty; "and still less how deep he is in love with her. Nancy dear," she asked, "was he to have walked over this morning?"

"He was coming from Haxey way," wailed Nancy. "He was to have been here at ten o'clock and it is past that now. Of course he has heard, and does not mean to come."

Hetty choked down an exceeding bitter sob.

"Anne, — sister Anne," she answered in her old light manner, though she desired to be alone and to weep: "go, look along the road and say if you see anyone coming?"

Nancy turned away, too generous to upbraid her sister, but hotly ashamed of her and her lack of contrition, and indignantly sorry for herself. Nevertheless she went towards the gate whence she could see along the road.

"It seems to me," said Emilia, "that you are scarcely awake yet to your — your situation."

She was trying to recover her superiority, which Hetty had shaken by guessing her secret.

"Oh, yes I am," Hetty answered. "But my time may be short for talking: so I use what ways I can to make my sisters listen. Hark!"

"He is coming!" Nancy announced, running towards

them from the gate. Honest love shone in her eyes. "He is coming—and there is someone with him!"

"Who?" asked Emilia. Hetty's eyes put the same question, far more eagerly. She rose up: her face was white.

"I don't know. He—they—are half a mile away. Yet I seem to know the figure. It is odd now—"

Hetty put out a hand and leaned it against the wood-stack to steady herself. The sharpened end of a stake pierced her palm, but she did not feel it.

"Is it—is it—" Her lips worked and formed the words, inaudibly.

"Run and look again," commanded Emilia.

But Hetty turned and walked swiftly away. Could it be *he?* No—and yet why not? Until this moment she had not known how much she built upon that chance. She loved him still: at the bottom of her heart most tenderly. She had reproached herself, saying that her desire for him had nothing to do with love—was no genuine impulse to forgive, but a selfish cowardly longing to be saved, as only he could save her. She was wrong. She desired to be saved: but she desired far more wildly that he should play the man, justify her love and earn forgiveness. She had—and was, alas! to prove it—an almost infinite capacity to forgive. She, Hetty, of the reckless wit and tongue—she would meet him humbly—as one whose sin had been as deep as his . . .

Was it he? If so, she would beg his pardon for thoughts which had accused him of cowardice . . .

She could not wait for the truth. So much joy it

would bring, or so deep anguish. She walked away blindly towards the fields, not once looking back.

"So there you're hiding!" cried John Lambert triumphantly, saluting Nancy with a smacking kiss on either cheek, and in no way disconcerted by Emilia's presence.

Nancy pushed him away, but half-heartedly.

"No, you mustn't!" she protested, and her face grew suddenly tragic.

"Oh, I forgot for the moment!" John Lambert tried to look doleful. He was an energetic young land-surveyor, with tow-coloured hair and a face incurably jolly.

"You have heard, then?" asked Emilia.

"Why, bless you, your father was around to see me at eight o'clock yesterday morning, or some such hour. He must have saddled at once. He's a stickler, is the Rector. 'Young Mr. Lambert,' says he, very formal, or some such words, 'I regret to say I must retract my permission that you should marry into my family, as doubtless you will wish to be released of your troth.' 'Hallo!' says I, a bit surprised, but knowing his crotchets: 'Why, what have I been doing?' 'Nothing,' says he. 'Then what has *she* been up to?'"—this with a wink at Emilia—"'Nothing,' says he again, and pours out the whole story, or so much of it as he knew and guessed, and winds up with 'I release you,' and a bow very formal and stiff. 'How about Miss Nancy?' I asked; 'does she release me too?' 'I haven't asked her,' he says, and goes on that he is not in the habit of being guided by his daughters. To

which I replied: 'Well, I am — by one of 'em, anyhow — or hope to be. And, if you don't mind, I'll step round to-morrow at the hour she expects me. I'd do it this moment if I hadn't a job at Bawtry. And I'm sorry for you, Rector,' I said, 'but if you think it makes a penn'orth of difference to me apart from that, you're mistaken.' And so we parted."

"Have you thought of the consequences?" Nancy demanded, tearful, but obviously worshipping this very ordinary young man.

"No, I haven't."

"She is back again."

"Oh, is she? Then she found him out quick. Poor Hetty! She must be in a taking too!" His face expressed commiseration for a moment, but with an effort, and sprang back to jollity as a bow is released from its cord. "Curious, how quickly a bit of news like that gets about. I picked up with a man on the road — said his name was Wright and he comes from Lincoln — a decent fellow — tradesman — plumber, I think. At all events he knows a deal about you, and began, after a while, pumping me about your sister. I saw in a moment that he had heard something, and gave him precious little change for his money. Talked as if he knew more than I did, if only he cared to tell: but of course I didn't encourage him."

"Wright? — a plumber from Lincoln?" Emilia faltered, and her eyes met Nancy's.

"That's it. He had business with your father, he said. In fact I left him on his way to knock at the door."

The two sisters remembered the man on the knoll, and his bill. They were used to duns.

Emilia's eye signalled that John Lambert was to be kept away from the house at all costs; nor did she breathe freely until she saw the lovers crossing the fields arm-in-arm.

## VI

"AND my business is important. William Wright is the name, and you'd better say that I come from Lincoln direct."

The answer came back that Mr. Wesley would see Mr. Wright in his study, and thither accordingly Mr. Wright lurched, after pulling out a red handkerchief and dusting his boots on the front doorstep. At his entrance Johnny Whitelamb rose, gathered up some papers and retired. The Rector looked up from his writing-table, at the same moment pushing back and shutting the drawer upon Hetty's manuscript, which he had again been studying.

"Good morning, Mr. Wright. You have come about your bill, I suspect: the amount of which, if I remember — "

"Twelve-seventeen-six."

The Rector sighed. "It is extremely awkward for me to pay you just now. Still, no doubt you find it no less awkward to wait: and since you have come all the way from Lincoln to collect it — "

"Steady a bit," Mr. Wright interrupted; "I never said that. I said I'd come direct from Lincoln."

Mr. Wesley looked puzzled. "Pardon me, is not that the same thing?"

"No, it ain't. I'd be glad enough of my little bit of money to be sure: but there's more things than money in this world, Mr. Wesley."

"So I have sometimes endeavoured to teach."

"There's more things than money," repeated Mr. Wright, not to be denied: for it struck him as a really fine utterance, with a touch of the epigrammatic too, of which he had not believed himself capable. In the stir of his feelings he was conscious of an unfamiliar loftiness, and conscious also that it did him credit. He paused and added, "There's darters, for instance."

"Daughters?" Mr. Wesley opened his eyes wide.

"Darters." Mr. Wright nodded his head slowly and took a step nearer to the table. "Has Missy come back?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"If you mean my daughter Mehetabel—yes, she has returned."

"I saw her in Lincoln only yesterday morning. She didn't see me; but having (as you might say) my suspicions, I follered her: and I saw enough to make a man feel sore—leastways when he takes an interest in a young lady as I do in Miss Hetty. For, saving your presence, sir, you've a good-looking bunch, but she's the pick. 'Tis a bad business—a very bad business, Mr. Wesley. What, may I ask, are you going to do about it?"

"You certainly may *not* ask, Mr. Wright." The danger-signal twinkled for a moment under the Rector's brows; but he repressed it and turned towards a cupboard in the wall, where in a drawer lay fifteen pounds, ten of which he had designed to send to Oxford.

"Twelve pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence, I think you said?"

"Never mind the bill, sir, for a moment. And about Miss Hetty I'll ask ye no questions if you forbid it: but something I came to say, and it'll have to be said. First of all I want to be clear with you that I had no hand in this affair. On the contrary, I saw it coming and warned her against the fellow."

"I have not the least need of your assurance. I did not even know you were acquainted—"

"No, you don't need it; but I need to give it. *Very* well: now comes my point. Here's a young lady beautiful as roses, *and* that accomplished, *and* that thoroughbred, she makes an honest tradesman feel like dirt to look upon her. Oh, you needn't to stare, sir! William Wright knows breeding when he sees it, in man or beast; and as for feeling like dirt, why there's a sort of pleasure in it, if you understand me."

"I do not."

"No: I don't suppose you do. You're not the sort of man to feel like dirt before anyone—not before King George on his throne. But you may take my word for it there's a kind of man that likes it: when he looks at a woman, I mean. 'Take care, my lady,' I said; 'you're delicate and proud now, and as dainty as a bit of china. But once you fall off the shelf—well, down you go, and 'tis all over but the broom and the dust-heap. There you'll lie, with no man to look at you; worse than the coarsest pint-pot a man will drink out of.' You understand me now, Mr. Wesley?"

"I do, sir, to my sorrow, but —"

"But that's just where you're wrong — you *don't!*" Mr. Wright cried triumphantly, and pursued with an earnestness which held Mr. Wesley still in his chair. "I'll swear to you, sir, that if I could have stopped this, I would: ay, though it killed my only chance. But I couldn't. The thing's done. And I tell you, sir" — his face was flushed now, and his voice shaking — "broken as she is, I do worship Miss Hetty beyond any woman in the world. I do worship her as if she had tumbled slap out of heaven. I — I — there you have it, anyway: so if you'll leave talking about the little account between us —"

Mr. Wesley stood up, drew out his keys, opened the cupboard and began counting the sum out upon the table.

"You misunderstand me, sir: indeed you do!" Mr. Wright protested.

"Maybe," answered the Rector grimly. "But I happen to be consulting my own choice. Twelve pounds seventeen and sixpence, I think you said? You had best sit down and write out a receipt."

"But why interrupt a man, sir, when he's thinking of higher things, and with his hand 'most too shaky to hold a pen?"

The Rector walked to the window and stood waiting while the receipt was made out: then took the paper, went to the cupboard and filed it, locked the door and resumed his seat.

"Now, sir, let me understand your further business. You desire, I gather, to marry my daughter Mehetabel?"

Mr. Wright gasped and swallowed something in his throat. Put into words, his audacity frightened him. "That's so, sir," he managed to answer.

"Knowing her late conduct?"

"If I didn't," Mr. Wright answered frankly, "I shouldn't ha' been fool enough to come."

"You are a convinced Christian?"

"I go to church off and on, if that's what you mean, sir."

"'Tis not in the least what I mean, Mr. Wright."

"There's no reason why I shouldn't go oftener."

"There is every reason why you should. You are able to maintain my daughter?"

"I pay my way, sir; though hard enough it is for an honest tradesman in these times." Insensibly he dropped into the tone of one pressing for payment. The Rector regarded him with brows drawn down and the angry light half-veiled, but awake in his eyes now and growing. Mr. Wright, looking up, read danger and misread it as threatening *him*. "Indeed, sir," he broke out, courageously enough, "I feel for you: I do, indeed. It seems strange enough to *me* to be standing here and asking you for such a thing. But when a man feels as I do t'ards Miss Hetty he don't know himself: he'll go and do that for which he'd call another man a fool. Kick me to doors if you want to: I can't help it. All I tell you is, I worship her from the top of her pretty head to her shoestrings; and if she were wife of mine she should neither wash nor scrub, cook nor mend, but a room I would make for her, and chairs and cushions she should

have to sit on, and books to read, and pens and paper to write down her pretty thoughts; and not a word of the past, but me looking up to her and proud all the days of my life, and studying to make her comfortable, like the lady she is!"

During this remarkable speech Mr. Wesley sat without a smile. At the end of it, he lifted a small hand-bell from the writing-table and rang it twice.

Mr. Wright made sure that this was a signal for his dismissal. He mopped his face. "Well, it can't be helped. I've been a fool, no doubt: but you've had it straight from me, as between man and man."

He picked up his hat and was turning to go, when the door opened and Mrs. Wesley appeared.

"My dear," said the Rector, "the name of this honest man is Wright — Mr. William Wright, a plumber, of Lincoln. To my surprise he has just done me the honour of offering to marry Mehetabel."

Mrs. Wesley turned from the bowing Mr. Wright and fastened on her husband a look incredulous but scared.

"I need scarcely say he is aware of — of the events which make his offer an extremely generous one."

The signal in the Rector's eyes was blazing now. His wife rested her hand on a chair-back to gain strength against she knew not what. Mr. Wright smiled, vaguely apologetic; and the smile made him look exceedingly foolish; but she saw that the man was in earnest.

"I think," pursued Mr. Wesley, aware of her terror, aware of the pain he took from his own words, but now for the moment fiercely enjoying both — "I think," he

pursued slowly, "there can be no question of our answer. I must, of course, make inquiry into your circumstances, and assure myself that I am not bestowing Mehetabel on an evil-liver. Worthless as she is, I owe her this precaution, which you must pardon. I will be prompt, sir. In two days, if you return, you shall have my decision; and if my inquiries have satisfied me — as I make no doubt they will — my wife and I can only accept your offer and express our high sense of your condescension."

Mr. Wright gazed, open-mouthed, from husband to wife. He saw that Mrs. Wesley was trembling, but her eyes held no answer for him. He was trembling, too.

"You mean that I'm to come along?" he managed to stammer.

"I do, sir. On the day after to-morrow you may come for my answer. Meanwhile — "

Mr. Wright never knew what words the Rector choked down. They would have surprised him considerably. As it was, reading his dismissal in a slight motion of Mrs. Wesley's hand, he made his escape; but had to pull himself up on the front doorstep to take his bearings and assure himself that he stood on his feet.

## VII

"She graced my humble roof and blest my life,
Blest me by a far greater name than wife;
Yet still I bore an undisputed sway,
Nor was 't her task, but pleasure, to obey;
Scarce thought, much less could act, what I denied.
In our low house there was no room for pride:" etc.

*The Rev. Samuel Wesley's Verses of his Wife.*

"It is an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike. . . ."

"I am, I believe, got on the right side of fifty, infirm and weak; yet, old as I am, since I have taken my husband 'for better, for worse,' I'll take my residence with him: where he lives, I will live: and where he dies, will I die: and there will I be buried. God do so unto me and more also, if aught but death part him and me."

*Mrs. Wesley's Letters.*

MRS. WESLEY guessed well enough what manner of words her husband had choked down. She stood and watched his face, waiting for him to lift his eyes. But he refused obstinately to lift them, and went on rearranging with aimless fingers the pens and papers on his writing-table.

At length she plucked up her courage. "Husband," she said, "let us take counsel together. We are in a plight that wrath will not cure: but, be angry as you will, we cannot give Hetty to this man."

It needed but this. He fixed his eyes on hers now,

and the light in them first quivered, then grew steady as a beam. "Did you hear me give my promise?" he demanded.

"You had no right to promise it."

"I do not break promises. And I take others at their word. Has she or has she not vowed herself ready to marry the first honest man who will take her; ay, and to thank him?"

"She was beside herself. We cannot take advantage of such a vow."

"You are stripping her of the last rag of honour. I prefer to credit her with courage at least: to believe that she hands me the knife and says, 'cut out this sore.' But wittingly or no she has handed it to me, and by heaven, ma'am, I will use it!"

"It will kill her."

"There are worse things than death."

"But if — if the *other* should seek her and offer atonement —"

Mr. Wesley, pacing the room with his hands beneath his coat-tails, halted suddenly and flung up both arms, as a man lifts a stone to dash it down.

"What! Accept a favour from *him!* Have you lived with me these years and know me so little? And can you fear God and think to save your daughter out of hell by giving her back her sin, to rut in it?"

Mrs. Wesley shook her head helplessly. "Let her be punished, then, in God's natural way. Vengeance is His, dear: ah, do not take it out of His hands in your anger, I beseech you!"

"God for my sins made me her father, and gave me authority to punish." He halted again and cried suddenly, "Do you think this is not hurting me!"

"Pause then, for it is His warning. Who *is* this man? What do you know of him? To think of him and Hetty together makes my flesh creep!"

"Would you rather, then, see her —" But at sound of a sobbing cry from her, he checked the terrible question. "You are trying to unnerve me. 'Who is he?' you ask. That is just what I am going to find out." At the door he turned. "We have other children to think of, pray you remember. I will harbour no wantons in my house."

## VIII

AT first Hetty walked swiftly across the fields, not daring to look back. "Is it he?" she kept asking herself, and as often cried out against the hope. She had no right to pray as she was praying: it was suing God to make Himself an accomplice in sin. She ought to hate the man, yet — God forgive her! — she loved him still. Was it possible to love and despise together? If he should come . . . She caught herself picturing their meeting. He would follow across the fields in search of her. She would hear his footstep. Yet she would not turn at once — he should not see how her heart leapt. He would overtake her, call her by name. . . . She must not be proud: just proud enough to let him see how deep the wrong had been. But she would be humble too. . . .

She heard no footsteps. No voice called her. Unable to endure it longer, she came to a standstill and looked back. Between her and the parsonage buildings the wide fields were empty. She could see the corner of the woodstack. No one stood there. Away to the left two figures diminished by distance followed a footpath arm-in-arm — John Lambert and Nancy.

A great blackness fell on her. She had no pride now; she turned and went slowly back, not to the parsonage, but aslant by the bank of a dyke leading to the high-

road along which, a few hours ago, she had returned so wearily. She must watch and discover what man it was who had come with John Lambert.

Before she reached the low bridge by the road, she heard a tune whistled and a man's foot-fall approaching — not *his*. She supposed it to be one of the labourers, and in a sudden terror hid herself behind an ash-bole on the brink.

The man went by, still whistling cheerfully. She peered around the tree and watched him as he retreated — a broad-shouldered man, swinging a cudgel. A hundred yards or less beyond her tree he halted, with his back to her, in the middle of the road, and stayed his whistling while he made two or three ludicrous cuts with his cudgel at the empty air. This pantomime over, he resumed his way.

She recognized him by so much of his back as showed over the dwarf hedge. It was William Wright.

Was it he, then, who had come with John Lambert? Hetty sat down by the tree, and, with her eyes on the slow water in the dyke, began to think.

To be sure this man might have come to Wroote merely for his money. Yet (as she firmly believed) it was he who had written the letter which in effect had led to her running away. He might have used the debt to-day as a pretext: his motive, she felt certain, was curiosity to learn what his letter had brought about.

She bore him no grudge. He had fired the train, to be sure: but she was clear-sighted now, saw that the true fault after all was hers, and would waste no time

in accusing others. Very soon she dismissed him from her mind. In all the blank hopelessness of her fall from hope she put aside self-pity, and tasked herself to face the worst. To Emilia and Nancy she had spoken lightly, as if scarcely alive to her dreadful position, still less alive to her sin. They had misunderstood her: but in truth she had spoken so on the instinct of self-defence. Real defence she had none.

She knew she had none. And let it be said here that she saw no comfortable hope in religion. She had listened to a plenty of doctrine from her early childhood, but somehow the mysteries of God had seldom occupied her thoughts, never as bearing directly on the questions of daily life. If asked, for example, "did she believe in the Trinity?" or "did she believe in justification by faith?" she would have answered "Yes," without hesitating for a moment. But in fact these high teachings lay outside her private religion, which amounted to this — "God is all-seeing and omnipotent. To please Him I must be good; and being good gives me pleasure in turn, for I feel that His eye is upon me and He approves. He is terribly stern: but all-merciful too. If, having done wrong, I go to Him contritely, and repent, He will give me a chance to amend my ways, and if I honestly strive to amend them, He will forgive." In short — and perhaps because the word "Father" helped to mislead — she had made for herself an image of God by exalting and magnifying all that she saw best in her parents. And this view of Him her parents had confirmed insensibly, in a thousand trifles, by laying constant daily stress

upon good conduct, and by dictating it and judging her lapses with an air of calm authority, which took for granted that what pleased them was exactly what would please God.

So now, having done that which her mother and father could not forgive, at first she hardly dared to hope that God could by any means forgive it. In the warm sunlight of loving she had seen for a while that her father and mother were not always wise; nay, long beforehand in her discontent she had been groping towards this discovery. But now that the sunshine had proved a cruel cheat, she ran back in dismay upon the old guide-posts, and they pointed to a hell indeed.

She had been wicked. She craved to be good. She remembered Mary Magdalene, whom Christ had forgiven, and caught at a hope for herself. But why had Christ forgiven Mary? Because she had been sorry, and turned and walked the rest of her life in goodness? Because He had foreseen her long atonement? So Hetty believed. For her, too, then the way back to forgiveness lay through conduct — always through conduct; and for her the road stretched long, for not until death could she reach assurance. Of a way to forgiveness through faith (though she must have heard of it a hundred times) she scarcely thought; still less of a way through faith to instant assurance. To those who have not travelled by that road its end — though promised on the honour of God and proclaimed incessantly by those who have travelled and found it — seems merely incredible. Hardly can man or woman, taught from infancy to sus-

pect false guides, trust these reports of a country where to believe and to have are one.

Hetty sat by the tree and saw the road beyond her that it was steep and full of suffering. But for this she did not refuse it; she desired it rather. She saw also, that along it was no well of forgiveness to refresh her; the thirst must endure till she reached the end and went down in darkness to the river. This, too, she must endure, God in mercy helping her. What daunted her was conscience whispering that she had as yet no right to that mercy, no right even to tread the road. For though her sin was abhorrent, in her heart she loved her fellow-sinner yet. A sound of hoofs aroused her. Still screened by her tree, she saw her father trot by on the filly. In spite of the warm settled weather he carried his cloak before him strapped across the holsters. His ride, therefore, would be a long one; to Gainsborough at least — or to Lincoln?

She lifted her head and sat erect in a sharp terror. Was her father going to seek *him?* She had not thought of this as possible. And if so —

Leaping up she ran into the open and gazed after him, as though the sight of his bobbing figure could resolve her crowding surmises. For a minute and more she stood, gazing so; and then, turning, was aware of her mother coming slowly towards her across the wide field.

A number of shallow ditches, dry at this season, crossed the fields in parallels; and at each of these Mrs. Wesley picked up her skirts. "How young she is!"

was Hetty's thought as she came nearer, and it rose — purely from habit — above her own misery. Hetty was one of those women who admire other women ungrudgingly. She knew herself to be beautiful, yet in her eyes her mother had always the mien of a goddess.

For her mother's character, too, she had the deepest, tenderest respect; but it was the respect of a critic rather than of a child, and touched with humorous wonder. She knew her firmness of judgment, her self-control, her courage in poverty, the secret ardent piety illuminating her commonest daily actions; she knew how perfectly designed that character was for masculine needs, how strong for guidance the will even in yielding — but alas! how feeble to help a daughter.

"Your father is riding to Lincoln," said Mrs. Wesley as she drew near. Hetty scanned her closely, but read no encouragement in her face. She fell back on the tone she had used with Emilia and Nancy, knowing, however, that this time it would not be misunderstood.

"I saw that he had taken his cloak with him," she answered. "Be frank with me, mother. You would be frank, you know, with Jacky or Charles, if they were in trouble; whereas now you are not looking me in the face, and your own is white."

Mrs. Wesley did not answer, but walked with Hetty back to the tree and, at a sign, seated herself on the bank beside her, with her eyes on the road.

"I have been sitting here for quite a long time," began Hetty, after a pause, and went on lightly. "Before father passed a tradesman went by — a man called Wright."

She paused again as Mrs. Wesley's hands made an involuntary movement in her lap. "He has a bill against father; he called with it on the evening you came back from London. Is father riding after him to pay it?"

"What do you know of that man?" Mrs. Wesley muttered, with her head turned aside and her hands working.

"Very little; yet enough to suspect more than you guess," said Hetty calmly.

But her mother showed her now a face she had not looked to see.

"You know, then? — but no, you cannot!"

It was Hetty's turn to show a face of alarm. "What is it, dear? I thought—indeed I know—he had a notion about me — how I was behaving — and wrote a letter to father. But that cannot matter now. Is there anything worse? I understood he had merely an account against father; an ordinary bill. It *is* something worse — oh, tell me! Father is riding after him! I see it in your face. What is this trouble which I have added to?"

"The debt is paid, I believe," answered Mrs. Wesley; but she shook as she said it.

"Yet father is riding after him. What is the matter? Let me see your eyes!"

But her mother would not. In the long silence, looking at her, slowly — very slowly — Hetty understood. After understanding there followed another long silence, until Hetty drew herself up against the bole of the tree and shivered.

"Come back to the house, mother. You had better take my arm."

## IX

MR. WESLEY slept that night at Lincoln and rode back the next afternoon, reaching Wroote a little before nightfall. After stabling the filly he went straight to his study. Thither, a few minutes later, Mrs. Wesley carried his supper on a tray. He kissed her, but she saw at once from his manner that he would not talk, that he wished to be alone.

Hetty and Molly sat upstairs in the dusk of the garret, speaking little. Molly had exhausted her strength for the while and argued no more, but leaned back in her chair with a hand laid on Hetty's forehead, who — crouching on the floor against her knee — drew down the nerveless fingers, fondled them one by one against her cheek, and kissed them, thinking her own thoughts.

Downstairs a gloom, a breathless terror almost, brooded over the circle by the kitchen hearth. They knew of Hetty's probable fate — the sentence to be pronounced to-morrow; they had whispered it one to another, and while they condemned her it awed them.

Soon after nine Johnny Whitelamb came in from the fields where for two hours he had been walking fiercely but quite aimlessly. Great drops of sweat stood out on his temples, over which his hair fell lank and clammy. His shoes and stockings were dusted over with fine earth.

He did not speak, but lit his candle and went off to his bed-cupboard under the stairs.

Before ten o'clock the rest of the family crept away to bed. Mr. Wesley sat on in his study. This was the night of the week on which he composed his Sunday morning's sermon. He wrote at it steadily until midnight.

Next morning, about an hour after breakfast, Mrs. Wesley heard the hand-bell rung in the study—the sound for which (it seemed to her) she had been listening in affright for two long days. She went at once. In the passage she met Johnny Whitelamb coming out.

"I am to fetch Miss Hetty," he whispered with a world of dreadful meaning.

But for once Johnny was not strictly obedient. Instead of seeking Hetty he went first across the farmyard and through a small gate whence a path took him to a duck-pond at an angle of the kitchen-garden, and just outside its hedge. A pace or two from the brink stood a grindstone in a wooden frame; and here, on the grindstone handle, sat Molly watching the ducks.

"He has sent for her," announced Johnny, and glanced towards the kitchen-garden. "Is she there?"

Molly rose with a set face. She did not answer his question.

"You must give me ten minutes," she said. "Ten minutes; on no account must you bring her sooner."

She limped off towards the house.

So it happened that as Mr. and Mrs. Wesley stood and faced each other across the writing-table they heard

a gentle knock, and, turning with a start, saw the door open and Molly walk boldly into the room.

"We are busy," said the Rector sharply, recovering himself. "I did not send for you."

"I know it," Molly answered; "but I am come first to explain."

"If you are here to speak for your sister, I wish to hear no explanations."

"I know it," Molly answered again; "but I need to give them; and, please you, father, you will listen to me."

Mr. Wesley gasped. Of all his daughters this deformed one had rendered him the most absolute obedience; of her alone he could say that, apart from her bodily weakness, she had never given him a moment's distress. In a family where high courage was the rule her timidity was a by-word; she would turn pale at the least word of anger. But she was brave now, as a dove to defend her brood.

"You are using a secret" — her voice trembled, but almost at once grew steady again — "a secret between me and Hetty which I had no right to betray. If I told it to mother, it was because she seemed to doubt of Hetty's despair; because I believed, if only she knew, she would come to Hetty and help her — the more eagerly the worse the need. Mother will tell you that was my only reason. I was very foolish. Mother would not help, or perhaps she could not. She went straight to you with the tale — this poor pitiful tale of an oath taken in passion by the unhappiest girl on earth. Yes, and

the dearest, and the noblest! . . . But why do I tell you this? You are her father and her mother, and it is nothing to you; you prefer to be her judges. Only I say that you have no right to my secret. Give it back to me! You shall not use it to do this wickedness!"

"Molly!" The last word fairly took Mrs. Wesley's breath away; she glanced at the Rector; but the explosion she expected hung fire, although he was breathing hard.

Molly, too, was panting, but she went on recklessly. "Yes; a wickedness! She swore it, but she did not mean it. Even had she meant it, she was not responsible. . . . No, mother, you need not look at me so. I have been thinking, and father shall hear the truth for once. Had he been kind—had he even been just—Hetty had never run away. Oh, sir, you are a good man! but you are seldom kind, and you are rarely just. You plan what seems best to you—best for Sam and Jacky and Charles—best for us too, maybe; but of us, apart from your wishes, you never think at all. Oh, yes again, you are good; but your temper makes life a torture—"

"Silence!" Mr. Wesley thundered out suddenly.

But the thunder did not affect Molly one whit.

"You may do what you will to me, sir; but you have heard the truth. You are a tyrant to those you love: and now in your tyranny you are going to do what even in your tyranny you have never done before—a downright wickedness. Thwarted abroad, you have drunk of power at home till you have come to persuade yourself that our

souls are yours. They are not. You may condemn Hetty to misery as you have driven — yes, driven — her to sin: but her soul is not yours and this secret of hers is not yours!"

But here standing beside the table she began to sway, then to sob and laugh unnaturally. Mrs. Wesley, instantly composed at sight of a physical breakdown, stepped to her and caught her by both wrists, but not before she had pointed a finger point-blank at her father's gray face.

"But — but — he is ridiculous!" she gasped between her short outcries. "Look at him! A ridiculous little man!"

Her mother took her by both shoulders and forced her from the room, almost carried her upstairs, dashed cold water over her face and left her to sob out her hysterics on her bed. It had been a weak, undignified exit: but those last words, which she never remembered to have uttered, her father never forgot. In all the rest of her short life Molly never had a sign from him that he remembered her outbreak: also he never again spoke a harsh word to her.

While her mother bent over her, waiting for the attack to subside, a knock sounded below stairs. Molly heard it, raised herself on the bed for a moment, staring wildly, then sank back helpless, and her moaning began afresh.

Mrs. Wesley turned her face away quickly; and with that her gaze, passing out through the garret window, fell on a figure crossing the yard towards the house.

It was Hetty, moving to the sacrifice. And below, on the other side of the house, the man was knocking to claim her.

For a moment Mrs. Wesley felt as one in a closing trap. It was she, not Hetty, upon whom these iron teeth of fate were meeting; and Hetty, the true victim, had become part of the machine of punishment. The illusion passed almost as quickly as it had come, and with a glance at the figure on the bed she hurried downstairs in time to meet Hetty at the back door.

As she opened it she heard William Wright's footstep in the passage behind, and his shuffling halt outside the study door, while Jane, the servant, rapped for admittance.

Hetty, too, heard it, and bent her head.

"We had best go in at once," Mrs. Wesley suggested, desperately anxious now to come to the worst and get it over.

Hetty bent her head again and followed without a word. The two men were standing — the Rector by his writing-table, Mr. Wright a little inside the door. He drew aside to let the two ladies pass and waited, fumbling with his hat and stick and eying the pattern of the carpet. There was no boldness about him. It seemed he dared not look at Hetty.

"Ah!" Mr. Wesley cleared his throat. "There is no reason, Mr. Wright, why we should protract a business which (as you may guess) must needs be extremely painful to some of us here. I have made inquiries about you and find that, though not well-to-do, you bear the reputation of an honest man, even a kind one. It

appears that at great cost to yourself you have made provision for an aged father, going (I am told) well beyond the strict limits of a son's duty. Filial obedience—" The Rector's eyes here fell upon Hetty and he checked himself. "But I will not enlarge upon that. You ask to marry my daughter. She is in no position to decline your offer, but must rather accept it and with thanks, in humility. As her father I commend her to your love and forbearance."

There was silence for a while. Mr. Wright lifted his head: and now his culprit's look had vanished and in its place was one of genuine earnestness.

"I thank ye, sir," he said; "but, if 'tis no liberty, I'd like to hear what Miss Hetty says." Hetty, too, lifted her eyes and for the first time since entering rested them on the man who was to be her husband. Mrs. Wesley saw how they blenched and how she compelled them to steadiness; and turned her own away.

"Sir," said Hetty, "you have heard my father. Although he has not chosen to tell you, I am bound and must answer under my bond unless he release me."

"For your salvation, as I most firmly believe, I refuse to release you," said the Rector.

"Then, sir," she continued, still with her eyes on William Wright, "under my bond I will answer you. If, as I think, those who marry without love sin against God and themselves, my father is driving out sin by sin. I cannot love you: but what I do under force I will do with an honest wish to please. I thank you for stooping to one whom her parents cast out. I shall remem-

ber my unworthiness all the more because you have overlooked it. You are all strange to me. Just now I shrink from you. But you at least see something left in me to value. Noble or base your feeling may be: it is something which these two have not. I will try to think it noble — to thank you for it all my days — to be a good wife."

She held out her hand. As Mr. Wright extended his, coarse and not too clean, she touched it with her finger-tips and faced her father, waiting his word of dismissal.

But the Rector was looking at his wife. For a moment he hesitated; then, stepping forward, drew her arm within his, and the pair left the room together.

## X

WILLIAM WRIGHT stared at the door as it closed upon them. Hetty did not stir. To reach it she must pass him. She stood by the writing-table, her profile turned to him, her body bent with a great shame; suffering anguish, yet with an indignant pride holding it down and driving it inward as she repressed her bosom's rise and fall. Even a callous man must have pitied her; and William Wright, though a vulgar man, was by no means a callous one.

"Miss Hetty —" he managed to say, and was ashamed that his voice shook.

She did not seem to hear.

"Miss Hetty —" His voice was louder and he saw that she heard. "There's a deal I'd like to say, but the things that come uppermost are all foolish. F'r instance, what I most want to say is that I'm desperate sorry for you. And — and here's another thing, though 'tis even foolisher. When I came to speak to your father, day before yestiddy, the first thing he did was to pay me down every penny he owed me — not that I was thinking of it for one moment —"

She had turned her head away at first, yet not as if refusing to listen: but now from a sudden stiffening of her shoulders, he saw that he was offending.

"Nay, now," he persisted, "but you must hear me finish. I want you to know what I did with it. I went home with it jingling in my pocket, and called out my father and spread it on the counter before him. 'Look at it,' I said, and his eyes fairly glistened. 'And now,' I said, 'hear me tell you that neither you nor I touches a penny of it.' I took him up the hill to the cathedral and crammed it into a box there. For the touch of it burned my fingers till I got rid of it, same as it burned your father's. The old man fairly capered to see me and cried out that I must be mad. 'Think so?' said I, 'then there's worse to come.' I led him home again, went to my drawerful of savings, and counted out the like sum to a penny. 'That's towards a chair for her,' said I; 'and that's towards a sofy; and there's for this, and there's for that. If she will condescend to the likes of me, like a queen she shall be treated while I have fingers to work.' That's what I said, Miss Hetty: and that's what I want to tell you, foolish as you'll think it, and rough belike."

She turned suddenly upon him with swimming eyes. "'Condescend'?" she echoed.

He nodded. "That's so: and like dirt you may treat me. You did once, you know. I'd like it to go on."

She spread her hands vaguely. "Why *will* you be kind to me? when—when—"

"When you'd far liefer have every excuse to hate the sight of me. Oh, I understand! Well, I'd even give you that, if it pleased you, and I could."

She looked at him now, long and earnestly. Her next

question was a strange one and had little connection with her thoughts.

"Did you sign that letter?"

"What letter?"

"The one you sent to father."

He fingered his jaw in a puzzled way. "I never sent any letter to your father. Writing's none so easy to me, though sorry I am to say it."

"Then it must have been —" Light broke on her, but she paused and suppressed Patty's name.

"I like you," she went on, "because you speak honestly with me."

"Come, that's better."

"No: I want you to understand. It's because your honesty makes me able to be honest with you." She drew herself up to the height of her superb beauty and touched her breast. "You see me?" she asked in a low, hurried voice. "I am yours. My father has said it, and I repeat it, adding this: I make no bargain, except that you will be honest. I am to be your wife: use me as you will. All that life with you calls to be undergone, I will undergo: as his drudge to the hind in the fields I offer myself. Nothing less than that shall satisfy me, since through it — can you not see? — I must save myself. But oh, sir! since something in me makes you prize me above other women, even as I am, let that compel you to be open with me always! When, as it will, a thought makes you turn from me — though but for a moment — do not hide it. I would drink all the cup. I must atone — let me atone!"

She walked straight up to him in her urgency, but suddenly dropped her arms. He stared at her, bewildered.

"I shall have no such thoughts, Miss Hetty."

## XI

BEYOND the kitchen-garden a raised causeway led into the Bawtry road, between an old drain of the Torne River and a narrower ditch running down to the parsonage duck-pond. The ditch as a rule was dry, or almost dry, being fed through a sluice in the embankment from time to time when the waters of the duck-pond needed replenishing.

Half an hour later, as William Wright — who had business at Bawtry — left the yard by the small gate and came stepping briskly by the pond, Johnny Whitelamb pushed through the hedge at the end of the kitchen-garden, attempted a flying leap across the ditch and scrambled — with one leg plastered in mud to the knee — up to the causeway, where he stood waving his arms like a windmill and uttering sounds as rapid as they were incoherent.

The plumber, catching sight of this agitated figure on the path ahead, stood still for a moment. He understood neither the noises nor the uncouth gestures, but made sure that some accident had happened.

"Here, what's wrong?" he demanded, moving on and coming to a halt again in front of Johnny.

But still Johnny gurgled and choked. "You — you mustn't come here!"

"Eh, why not? What's doing?"

"You mustn't come here. You *shan't*— it's worse than murder! P-promise me you won't come here again."

Mr. Wright began to understand, and his eye twinkled. "Who's to prevent it, now?"

"*I* will, if you w-won't listen to reason. You are killing her, between you: you don't know w-what wickedness you're doing. She's — she's an angel."

"Bravo, my lad! So she is, every inch of her." The plumber held out his hand.

Johnny drew his away indignantly and began to choke again. "She's not for you. It'll all come right if you stay away. P-promise me you'll stay away!"

"There I don't agree with you."

"C-can you fight?"

"A bit. Here, keep on your coat, boy, and don't be a fool. Hands off, you young dolt!"

There was barely room on the causeway for two to pass. As Mr. Wright thrust by, Johnny snatched furiously at his arm and with just enough force to slew him round. Letting go, he struck for his face.

The plumber had no wish to hurt the lad. Being a quick man with his fists, he parried the blow easily enough.

"No more of this!" he shouted, and as Johnny leapt again, hurled him off with a backward sweep of his wrist.

He must have put more weight into it than he intended. Johnny, flung to the very edge of the causeway, floundered twice to recover his balance; his feet

slipped on the mud, and with hands clutching the air he soused into the water at Mr. Wright's feet.

"Hullo!" called out a cheerful voice. "Whar you two up to?"

Dick Ellison was coming down the causeway towards the house, somewhat advanced in liquor, though it wanted an hour of noon. Wright, who knew him only by sight, did not observe this at once. "Come and help," he answered, dropping on his knees by the brink and offering Johnny a hand.

Johnny declined it. He was a strong swimmer, and in a couple of strokes regained the bank and scrambled to firm ground again, dripping from head to heel and looking excessively foolish.

"Wha's matter?" demanded Mr. Ellison again.

"Nothing he need be ashamed of," answered Mr. Wright. "Here, shake hands, my boy!"

But Johnny dropped his head and walked away, hiding tears of rage and shame.

"Sulky young pig," commented Mr. Ellison, staring blearily after him. A thought appeared to strike him — "Blesh me, you're the new son-law!"

"Yes, sir: Miss Hetty has just honoured me with her consent."

"Consent? I'll lay she had to! Sukey — tha's my wife — told me you were in the wind. *I* said the old man's wrong — all right, patching it up — Shtill —" He paused and corrected himself painfully. "*Still*, duty to c'nsult family; 'stead of which, he takes law in's own hands. Now list'n this, Mr. ——"

"Wright."

"Qui-so." He pulled himself together again. "*Quite* so. Now *I* say, it's hard on the jade. *You* say, 'Nothing of the sort: she's made her bed and must lie on it.'"

"No, I don't."

"I — er — beg your pardon? You must allow me finish my argument. *I* say, 'Look here, I'm a gentleman; feelings of a gentleman' — *You're* not a gentleman, eh?"

"Not a bit like one," said the plumber cheerfully.

"Tha's what I thought. Allow me to say so, I respect you for it — speaking out, I mean. Now what I say is, wench kicks over the traces — serve her right wharrever happens: but there's *family* to consider — "

Here Mr. Wright interrupted firmly. "Bless your heart, Mr. Ellison, I quite see. I've made a mistake this morning."

"No offence, you understand."

"No offence at all. It turns out I've given the wrong man a ducking."

"Eh?"

"It can easily be set right. Some day when you're sober. Good morning!"

William Wright went his way whistling. Dick Ellison stared along the causeway after him.

"Low brute!" he said musingly. "If she's to marry a fellow like that, Sukey shan't visit her. I'm sorry for the girl, too."

Beyond the hedge, in a corner of the kitchen-garden, Johnny Whitelamb lay in his wet clothes with his face

buried in a heap of mown grass. He had failed, and shamefully, after preparing himself for the interview by pacing (it seemed to him, for hours) the box-bordered walks which Molly had planted with lilies and hollyhocks, pinks and sweet-williams and mignonette. It was high June now, and the garden breaking into glory. He had tasted all its mingled odours this morning while he followed the paths in search of Hetty; and when at length he had found her under the great filbert tree, they seemed to float about her and hedge her as with the aura of a goddess. He had delivered his message, trembling: had watched her go with firm step to the sacrifice. And then — poor boy — wild adoration had filled him with all the courage of all the knights in Christendom. He alone would champion her against the dragon. . . . And the dragon had flung him into the ditch like a rat! He hid his face in the sweet-smelling hillock.

For years after, the scent of a garden in June, or of new-mown hay, caused him misery, recalling this the most abject hour of his life.

## XII

SIX weeks later Mr. Wesley married William Wright and Hetty in the bare little church of Wroote. Her sisters (among them Patty, newly returned from Kelstein) sat at home: their father had forbidden them to attend. A fortnight before they had stood as bridesmaids at Nancy's wedding with John Lambert, and all but Molly had contrived to be mirthful and forget for a day the shadow on the household and the miserable woman upstairs. Hetty had no bridesmaids, no ringing of bells. The church would have been empty but for a steady downpour which soaked the new-mown hay, and turned the fields into swamps, driving the labourers and their wives, who else had been too busy, to take recreation in a ceremony of scandal. For of course the whole story had been whispered abroad. It was to keep them away that the Rector had chosen a date in the very middle of the hay-harvest, and they knew it and enjoyed his discomfiture. He, on his part, when the morning broke with black and low-lying clouds, had been tempted to read the service in the parlour at home; but his old obstinacy had asserted itself. Hetty's feelings he did not consider.

The congregation pitied Hetty. She, with Molly to help, had been the parish alms-giver, here and at Ep-

worth; and though the alms had been small, kind words had gone with the giving. Of gratitude—active gratitude—they were by race incapable: also they were shrewd enough to detect the Wesley habit of condescending to be kind. She belonged to another world than theirs: she was a lady, blood and bone. But they were proud of her beauty, and talked of it, and forgave her for the sake of it.

They hated the Rector; yet with so much of fear as kept them huddled to-day at the west end under the dark gallery. A space of empty pews divided them from Mrs. Wesley, standing solitary behind her daughter at the chancel step.

"O God, who hast consecrated the state of Matrimony to such an excellent mystery that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and his Church: look mercifully upon these thy servants. . . ."

A squall of rain burst upon the south windows, darkening the nave. Mrs. Wesley started, and involuntarily her hands went up towards her ears. Then she remembered, dropped them and stood listening with her arms rigid.

Under a penthouse in the parsonage yard, Molly and Johnny Whitelamb watched the downpour, and the cocks and hens dismally ruffling under shelter of the eaves.

"She was the best of us all, the bravest and the cleverest."

"She was like no one in the world," said Johnny.

"And the most loyal. She loved me best, and I have done nothing for her."

"You did what you could, Miss Molly."

"If I were a man — Oh, Johnny, of what use are my brothers to me?"

Johnny was silent.

"The others were jealous of her. She could no more help excelling them in wit and spirits than she could in looks. None of them understood her, but I only — and you, I think, a little."

"It was an honour to know her and serve her. I shall never forget her, Miss Molly."

"*We* will never forget her — we two. When the others are not listening we will talk about her together and say, She did this or that; or, Just so she looked; or, At such a time she was happy. We will recollect her sayings and remind each other. Oh, Hetty! dear, dear Hetty!"

Johnny was fairly blubbering. "But she will visit us sometimes. Lincoln is no great distance."

Molly shook her head disconsolately. "I do not think she will come. Father will refuse to see her. For my part, after the wickedness he has committed this day —"

"Hush, Miss Molly!"

"Is it not wrong he is doing? Is it not a wicked wrong? Answer me, John Whitelamb, if we two are ever to speak of her again." She glanced at his face and read how terribly old fidelity and new distrust were tearing him between them. "Ah, I understand!" she said, and laid a hand on his coat-sleeve.

The service over and the names signed in the vestry, Mr. Wesley marched out to the porch for a view of the weather. Half a score of gossips were gathered there among the sodden graves awaiting the bridal party. They gave back a little, nudging and plucking one another by the arm ; for all the notice he took of them they might have been tombstones.

The rain had ceased to fall, and though leaden clouds rolled up from the south-west, threatening more, a pale gleam, almost of sunshine, rested on the dreary landscape. The Rector nodded his head and strode briskly down the muddy path. The newly married pair followed at a respectful distance, Mrs. Wesley close behind. Hetty showed no sign of emotion. She had given her responses clearly and audibly before the altar, and she bore herself as bravely now.

As they entered the house the Rector turned and held out his hand to the bridegroom. "You will not find us hospitable, I fear. But there are some refreshments laid in the parlour: and my wife will see that you are served while I order the gig. Your wife will have time to say farewell to her sisters if she chooses. As I may not see her again, I commit her to your kindness and God's forgiveness."

"At least you will bless her, husband!" entreated Mrs. Wesley. But he turned away.

Twenty minutes later bridegroom and bride drove southward towards Lincoln, under a lashing shower and with the wind in their faces.

## XIII

A FEW words will tie together the following letters or extracts from letters. John was ordained on September 19th. A few weeks later he preached his first sermon, at South Leigh, a village near Witney and but a few miles out of Oxford. He and Charles visited Wroote that Christmas, and on January 11th he preached a funeral sermon at Epworth for John Griffith, a hopeful young man, the son of one of his father's parishioners, taking for his theme 2 Samuel xii. 23, "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" —a text obvious enough. He returned for the beginning of the Oxford Lent Term, having had no sight of Hetty. His chances of a fellowship at Lincoln College had long been debated, and on March 17th he was elected. Meanwhile Charles had passed out of Westminster with a studentship to support him at Christ Church, the college his brother was leaving.

The first letter — from Patty — bears no date, but was written from Wroote about the time of John's ordination.

*From Martha Wesley to her brother John*

DEAR BROTHER,—I believe it is above half a year since I wrote to you, and yet, though it is so long since, you never were so good as to write to me again; and you

have written several times since to my sisters, but have perfectly neglected your loving sister Martha, as if you had not known there was such a person in the world; at which I pretended to be so angry that I resolved I would never write to you more. Yet my anger soon gave way to my love, as it always does whenever I chance to be angry with you. But you only confirm me in the truth of an observation I have since made; which is, that if ever I love any person very well, and desire to be loved by them in return — as, to be sure, whoever loves desires to be loved — I always meet with unkind returns. I shall be exceedingly glad if you get the Fellowship you stand for; which if you do I shall hope that one of the family besides my brother Sam will be provided for. I believe you very well deserve to be happy, and I sincerely wish you may be so both in this life and the next.

For my own particular I have long looked upon myself to be what the world calls ruined — that is, I believe there will never be any provision made for me, but when my father dies I shall have my choice of three things, — starving, going to a common service, or marrying meanly as my sisters have done: none of which I like, nor do I think it possible for a woman to be happy *with a man that is not a gentleman*, for he whose mind is virtuous is alone of noble kind. Yet what can a woman expect but misery? My brother Ellison wants all but riches; my brother Lambert, I hope, has a little religion; poor brother Wright has abundance of good-nature, and, I hope, is religious; and yet sister Hetty is, I fear, entirely ruined, though it is not her husband's fault.

If you would be so good as to let me hear from you, you would add much to my satisfaction. But nothing can make me more than I am already, dear brother, your sincere friend and loving sister,

MARTHA WESLEY.

P.S. — I hope you will be so kind as to pardon the many faults in my letter. You must not expect I can write like sister Emily or sister Hetty. I hope, too, that when I have the pleasure of seeing you at Wroote you will set me some more copies, that I may not write so miserably.[1]

*From Samuel Wesley to his son John*

Wroote, *March* 21, 1726.

DEAR MR. FELLOW-ELECT OF LINCOLN, — I have done more than I could for you. On your waiting on Dr. Morley with this he will pay you £12. You are inexpressibly obliged to that generous man. We are all as well as can be expected. Your loving father,

SAMUEL WESLEY.

*From the same to the same*

Wroote, *April* 1, 1726.

DEAR SON JOHN, — I had both yours since the election. The last £12 pinched me so hard that I am forced to

[1] John had taught Patty to write. He and his favourite sister had many points of resemblance, not in handwriting only, but in features, speech, and habits. Dr. Adam Clarke, who knew them both intimately, declares that if they could have been dressed alike, it would not have been possible to distinguish one from the other.

beg time of your brother Sam till after harvest to pay him the £10 that you say he lent you. Nor shall I have so much as that (perhaps not £5) to keep my family till after harvest; and I do not expect that I shall be able to do anything for Charles when he goes to the University. What will be my own fate before the summer is over God only knows. *Sed passi graviora.* Wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln.

All at present from your loving father,

SAMUEL WESLEY.

*From John Wesley to his brother Samuel*

Lincoln College, Oxon.,
*April* 4, 1726.

DEAR BROTHER, — My father very unexpectedly, a week ago, sent me a bill on Dr. Morley for £12, which he had paid to the Rector's use at Gainsborough; so that now all my debts are paid, and I have still above £10 remaining. If I could have leave to stay in the country till my college allowance commences, this money would abundantly suffice me till then.

I never knew a college besides ours whereof the members were so perfectly well satisfied with one another, and so inoffensive to the other part of the University. All the Fellows I have yet seen are both well-natured and well-bred; men admirably disposed as well to preserve peace and good neighbourhood among themselves as to preserve it wherever else they have any acquaintance. I am, etc.,

JOHN WESLEY.

The next, addressed also to Sam, shows him making provision for Charles's entrance at Christ Church:

My mother's reason for my cutting off my hair is because she fancies it prejudices my health. As to my looks, it would doubtless mend my complexion to have it off, by letting me get a little more colour, and perhaps it might contribute to my making a more genteel appearance. But these, till ill health is added to them, I cannot persuade myself to be sufficient grounds for losing two or three pounds a year.[1] I am ill enough able to spare them.

Mr. Sherman says there are garrets, somewhere in Peckwater,[2] to be let for fifty shillings a year; that there are some honest fellows in college who would be willing to chum in one of them; and that, could my brother but find one of these garrets, and get acquainted with one of these honest fellows, he might possibly prevail on him to join in taking it; and then if he could but prevail upon someone else to give him £7 a year for his own room, he would gain almost £6 a year clear, if his rent were well paid. He appealed to me whether the proposal was not exceedingly reasonable? But as I could not give him such an answer as he desired, I did not choose to give him any at all.

Leisure and I have taken leave of one another. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so

[1] On a wig.

[2] A quadrangle in Christ Church. Mr. Sherman had been John's tutor there.

long indulged me. In health and sickness I hope I shall ever continue, with the same sincerity, your loving brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

*From Samuel Wesley to his son John*

*April* 17, 1726.

DEAR SON,—I hope Sander will be with you on Wednesday morn, with the horses, books, bags, and this. I got your mother to write the inclosed (for you see I can hardly scrawl), because it was possible it might come to hand on Tuesday; but my head was so full of cares that I forgot on Saturday last to put it into the post-house. I shall be very glad to see you, though but for a day, but much more for a quarter of a year. I think you will make what haste you can. I design to be at the Crown, in Bawtry, on Saturday night. God bless and send you a prosperous journey to your affectionate father,

SAMUEL WESLEY.

The day after receiving this John and Charles set out and rode down to Lincolnshire together.

## XIV

"FOR if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

John Wesley laid his Bible down beside him on the rustic seat under the filbert tree, and leaned back against the trunk with half-closed eyes. By-and-by he frowned, and the frown, instead of passing, grew deeper. His sermons, as a rule, arranged themselves neatly and rapidly, when once the text was chosen, but to-day his thoughts ran by fits and starts, and confusedly—a thing he abhorred.

In truth they kept harking back to the text, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses...." He had chosen it with many searchings of heart, for he knew that if he preached this sermon it would exasperate his father. Had he any right, knowing this, to preach it from his father's pulpit? After balancing the *pro's* and *contra's*, he decided that this was a scruple which his Christian duty outweighed. He was not used to look back upon a decision once taken: he had no thought now of changing his mind, but the prospect of a breach with his father unsettled him.

While he pondered, stabbing the turf with his heel,

Molly came limping along the garden-path. Her face was white and drawn. She had been writing for two hours at her father's dictation, and came now for rest to the seat which she and Hetty had in former days made their favourite resort.

Seeing it occupied, she paused in the outer shade of the great branches.

"You are thinking out your sermon?" she asked, smiling.

He nodded. "You seem tired," he remarked, eying her; but he did not rise or pick up his Bible to make room for her.

"A little," she confessed; "and my ears are hot. But Charles very good-naturedly left his *De Oratore* — on which I heard him say he was engaged — to relieve me. Johnny Whitelamb had to finish colouring a map."

"I don't think Charles needs much persuasion just now to leave his studies."

"He will not require them if he is to be an Irish squire."

"You count upon his choosing that?" John's frown grew deeper.

"Not if you dissuade him, Jack."

"I have not even discussed it with him. Once or twice on our way down he seemed to be feeling his way to a confidence and at the last moment to fight shy. No doubt he knows my opinion well enough. 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' But why should my opinion have so much weight with him?"

For a moment Molly considered her brother's cold and handsome young face. She put out a hand, plucked a twig from a low-drooping bough, and peeling the gummy rind, quoted softly:

> "'Why do you cross me in this exigent?'
> 'I do not cross you; but I will do so.'"

"If I remember," mused John, "that is what Shakespeare makes Octavius say to Mark Antony before Pharsalia."

She nodded. "Do you know that you always put me in mind of Octavius? You are so good-looking, and have the same bloodless way of following your own path as if you carried all our fates. Sometimes I think you *do* carry them."

"I thank you." He made her a mock bow.

"And I still think it was kind of Charles to come to my rescue, for I was tired." She glanced at the seat and he picked up his book. "No; you are composing a sermon and I will not interrupt you. But you must know that father expected you to help him this morning, and was put out at hearing that you had walked off."

"He and I have not agreed of late, and are likely to agree still less if I preach this sermon — as I shall."

"What is the subject?"

"I have not thought of a title yet; but you may call it 'Universal Charity,' or (better perhaps) 'The charity due to wicked persons.'"

"You mean Hetty?" She limped close to him. "Hetty may have done wickedly, but she is not a wicked person,

as you might have discovered had you let Universal Charity alone and practised it in particular, for once, by going to visit her. It is now close on four months that you and Charles have been home, and from here to Lincoln is no such great distance."

"You are a sturdy champion," he answered, eying her up and down. "As a matter of fact you are right, though you assert it rashly. How are you sure that I have not visited Hetty, seeing that three times I have been absent from home and for some days together?"

Molly winced. "The worst reproach to all of us, that her only champion was the weakling whom you all scorn! You do not understand weakness, Jack. As for my knowing that you had not visited her, Johnny Whitelamb took his holiday a fortnight ago and trudged to Lincoln to see her. She is living behind a dingy little shop with her husband, and his horrible old father, who drinks whatever he can filch from the till. They wink at it so long as he does not go too far; but William is trying to find him lodgings at Louth, which was his old home, and hopes to sell up the business and move to London with Hetty to try his fortune. Uncle Matthew has written to her, and will help them to move, I believe. And there was a baby coming, but mercifully something went wrong, poor mite! All this news she sent by Johnny, who reports that she is brave and cheerful and as beautiful as ever — more beautiful than ever, he said — but she talked long of you and Charles, and is said to have seen neither of you."

"So Whitelamb is in the conspiracy? Since you have

so much of his confidence, you might warn him to be careful. Doubts of our father's wisdom must unsettle him woefully. I do not ask to join the alliance, but it may please you to know that in my belief Hetty has been treated too fiercely for her deserts, and in my sermon I intend to hint at this pretty plainly."

Molly stared. "Dear Jack, it — it is good to have you on our side. But what good can a sermon do?"

"Not much, I fear. Still a testimony is a testimony."

"But the folks will know you are speaking of her."

"I mean them to."

"But — but —" Molly cast about, bewildered.

"I am venturing something," John interrupted coldly, "by testifying against my father. It is not over-pleasant to stand up and admit that in our own family we have sinned against Christ's injunction to judge not."

"I should think not, indeed!"

"Then you might reasonably show a little more pleasure at finding me prepared, to that extent, to take your side."

Molly gasped; his misunderstanding seemed to her too colossal to be coped with. "It will be a public reproach to father," she managed to say.

"I fear he may consider it so; and that is just my difficulty."

"But what good can it do to Hetty?"

"I was not, in the first instance, thinking of Hetty, but rather using her case as an example which would be fresh in the minds of all in the building. Nevertheless, since you put the question, I will answer that my argument

should induce our mother and sisters, as well as the parish, to judge her more leniently."

"The parish!" murmured Molly. "I was not thinking of *its* judgment. And I doubt if Hetty does."

"You are right. The particular case — though unhappily we cannot help dwelling on it — is merely an illustration. We, who have duties under Christ to all souls in our care, must neglect no means of showing them the light, though it involve mortifying our own private feelings."

Molly, who had been plucking and twisting all this while the twig between her fingers, suddenly cast it on the ground and hobbled away.

John gazed after her, picked up the book and set it down again. The sermon came easily now.

Having thought it out and arranged the headings in his mind, he returned to the house and wrote rapidly for two hours in his bedroom. He then collected his manuscript, folded it neatly, scribbled a note, and called down the passage to the servant, Jane, whom he heard bustling about the parlour and laying dinner. To her he gave the note and the sermon, to be carried to his father; picked up a crust of bread from the table; and a minute later he left the house for a long walk.

Returning a little before supper-time, he found the manuscript on the table by his bedside. No note accompanied it; there were none of the usual pencil-marks and comments in the margin. The Rector had restored it without a word.

For a moment he was minded to go and seek an interview; but decided that, his resolution being fixed, an interview would but increase pain to no purpose. He washed and went down to the parlour, walking past the door of the study, in which his father supped alone.

Next morning being Saturday, Mr. Wesley walked over to Epworth, to a room above a chandler's shop, where he and John lodged in turn as they took Epworth duty on alternate Sundays. The Rectory there was closed for the time and untenanted, the Ellisons having returned some months before to their own enlarged and newly furnished house. There, to be sure, a lodging might have been had at no cost, and Sukey offered it as in duty bound. She knew very well, however, that neither her father nor John could stomach being a guest of Dick's. The invitation was declined, and she did not press it.

So on Sunday, August 28th, Mr. Wesley took the services at Epworth while John stayed at home and preached his sermon in Wroote church.

From the pulpit he looked straight down into the tall Rectory pew, and once or twice his eyes involuntarily sought its occupants. Once, indeed, he paused in his discourse. It was after the words — "We are totally mistaken if we persuade ourselves that Christ was lenient towards sin. He made no hesitation in driving the money-changers from his Father's temple even with a whip. But he discriminated between the sin and the sinner. The fig tree he blasted was one which, bearing no fruit, yet made a false show of health: the

Pharisees he denounced were men who covered rottenness with a pretence of religion; the sinners he consorted with had a saving knowledge of their vileness. Sin he knew to be human and bound up in our nature: all was pardonable save the refusal to acknowledge it and repent, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost testifying within us. If we confess our sins not only is he faithful and just to forgive them, but he promises more joy in heaven over our repentance than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance. And why? Because, as David foretold, a broken spirit is God's peculiar sacrifice: 'a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' Yet we in this parish have despised it. With sorrow I admit before you that in the household to which you should reasonably look for example and guidance, it has been despised. What then? Are we wiser than Christ, or more absolute?"

He paused. His mother sat stiff and upright with her eyes bent on the ground. Only Charles and Molly looked up — she with a spot of red on either cheek, he with his bright pugnacious look, his nostrils slightly distended scenting battle with delight. Emilia and Patty were frowning; Kezzy, who hated all family jars, fidgeted with her prayer-book.

The sermon ended and the benediction pronounced, he fetched from the vestry the white surplice in which he had read the prayers, and came back to the pew in which the family waited as usual for the rest of the congregation to leave the church. Mrs. Wesley took the surplice, as she invariably took her husband's, to

carry it home and hang it in the wardrobe. They walked out. A fortnight before, his sisters had begun to discuss his sermon and rally him upon it as soon as they found themselves in the porch. To-day they were silent: and again at dinner, though John and his mother made an effort to talk of trivial matters, the girls scarcely spoke. Charles only seemed in good spirits and chattered away at ease, glancing at his brother from time to time with a droll twinkle in his eye.

Early next morning John set out for Epworth, having promised to relieve his father and visit the sick and poor there during the week. At Scawsit Bridge he met the Rector returning. The two shook hands and stood for a minute discussing some details of parish work: then each continued on his way. Not a word was said of the sermon.

## XV

JOHN remained at Epworth until Thursday evening. Dark was falling when he set out to tramp back to Wroote, but the guns of a few late partridge-shooters yet echoed across the common. A little beyond Scawsit Bridge a figure came over the fields towards him, walking swiftly in the twilight — a woman. He drew aside to let her pass; but in that instant she stretched out both hands to him and he recognized her.

"Hetty!"

She dropped her arms. "Are you not going to kiss me, Jack? Do you, too, cast me off?"

"God forbid!" he said, and lifted his face; for she was the taller by two inches. With a sob of joy she put out both hands again and drew his lips to hers, a palm pressed on either cheek.

"But what are you doing here?" he asked.

"My husband has business at Haxey. We came from Lincoln this morning, and just before sunset I crept over for a look at the house, hoping for a glimpse of you and Charles. They will not have me inside, Jack: father will not see me, and has forbidden the others. But I saw Johnny Whitelamb. He told me that Charles was indoors, at work transcribing for father, and not easily fetched out; but that you were expected home from

Epworth to-night. So I came to meet you. Was I running? I dare say. I was thirsty to see your face, dear, and hear your voice."

"We have all dealt hardly with you, Hetty."

"Ah, let that be! I must not pity myself, you understand; and indeed I was not thinking of myself. If only I could be invisible, and steal into the house at times and sit me down in a corner and watch their faces and listen! That would be enough, brother: I don't ask to join in that life again — only to stand apart and feed my eyes on it."

"You are not happy, then?"

"Happy?" She mused for a while. "My man is kind to me: kinder than I deserve. If God gives us a child —" She broke off, lowered her eyes and stammered, "You heard that I had — that one was born! Dead. He never breathed, the doctor told me. I ought to be glad, for *his* sake — and for William's — but I cannot be."

"It was God's goodness. Look at Sukey, now; how much of her time her children take up."

She drew back sharply and peered at him through the dusk.

"Now that time is restored to you," he went on, "you have nothing to do but to serve God without distraction, till you are sanctified in body, soul, and spirit."

"Jacky, dear," she asked hoarsely, "have they taught you at Oxford to speak like that?"

He was offended, and showed it. "I have been speaking up for you; too warmly for my comfort. Father and mother, and indeed all but Molly, will have it that you

talked lightly to them; that your penitence was feigned. I would not believe this, but that, as by marriage you redeemed your conduct, so now you must be striving to redeem your soul. If you deny this, I have been in error and must tell them so."

For a while she stood considering. "Brother," she said, "I will be plain with you. Since this marriage was forced upon me, I have tried — and, please God, I will go on trying — to redeem my conduct. But of my soul I scarcely think at all."

"Hetty, this is monstrous."

"I pray," she went on, "for help to be good. With tears I pray for it, and all day long I am trying to be good and do my duty. As for my soul, sometimes I wake and see the need to be anxious for it, and resolve to think of it anxiously: but when the morning comes, I have no time — the day is too full. And sometimes I grow rebellious and vow that it is no affair of mine: let them answer for it who took it in charge and drove me to tread this path. And sometimes I tell myself that once I had a soul, and it was sinful; but that God was merciful and destroyed it, with its record, when He destroyed my baby. The doctor swore to me that it never drew a separate breath; no, not one. Tell me, Jack: a child that has never breathed can know neither heaven nor hell — questions of baptism do not touch it — it goes out of darkness into darkness and is annihilated. Is that not so? So I assure myself, and sometimes I think that by the same stroke God wiped out the immortal part of me with its sins, that my body and brain go on living,

but that the soul of your Hetty will never come up for judgment, for it has ceased to be."

"Monstrous!"

"You understand," she went on wearily, "that this is but one of my thoughts. My heart denies it whenever I long to creep back to Wroote and listen to the old voices and be a child once more. But I am showing you what is the truth — that upon one plea or another I put my soul aside and excuse myself from troubling about it."

"Sadder hearing there could not be. You have an imperishable soul, and owe it a care which should come before your duty even to your husband."

"Ah, Jack, you may be a very great man: but you do not understand women! I wonder if you ever will? For now you do not even begin to understand."

He would have answered in hot anger, but a noise on the path prevented him. Four sportsmen came wending homeward in the dusk, shouldering their guns and laughing boisterously. In the loudest of the guffaws he recognized the voice of Dick Ellison.

"Hullo!" The leader pulled himself up with a chuckle. "Here's pretty goings-on — the little parson colloguing with a wench! Dick, Dick, aren't you ashamed of your relatives?"

"Ashamed of them long ago," stuttered Dick, lurching forward. He had been making free with the flask all day. "Who is it?" he demanded.

"Come, my lass — no need to be shy with me! Let's have a look at your pretty face." The fellow plucked at

Hetty's hood. John gripped his arm, was flung off with an indecent oath, and gripped him again.

"This lady, sir, is my sister."

"Eh?" Dick Ellison peered into Hetty's face. "So it is, by Jove! How d'ye do, Hetty?" He turned to his companion. "Well, you've made a nice mistake," he chuckled.

The man guffawed and slouched on. In two strides John was after him and had gripped him once more, this time by the collar.

"Not so fast, my friend!"

"Here, hands off! This gun's loaded. What the devil d'you want?"

"I want an apology," said John calmly. "Or rather, a couple of apologies." He faced the quartette: they could scarcely see his face, but his voice had a ring in it no less cheerful than firm. "So far as I can make out in this light, gentlemen, you are all drunk. You have made one of those foolish and disgusting mistakes to which men in liquor are liable: but I should suppose you can muster up sense enough between you to see that this man owes an apology."

"What if I refuse?"

"Why then, sir, I shall give myself the trouble to walk beside you until your sense of decency is happily restored. If that should not happen between this and your own door, I must leave you for the night and call upon you to-morrow."

"This is no tone to take among gentlemen."

"It is the tone you oblige me to take."

"Come away, Jack!" Hetty besought him in a whisper: but she knew that he would not.

"Surely," he said, "after so gross an offence you will lose no more time in begging my sister's pardon?"

"Look you now, master parson," growled the offender, "you are thin in the legs, but I am not too drunk to shoot snipe." With his gun he menaced John, who did not flinch.

But here Dick Ellison interposed. "Don't be a fool, Congdon! Put up your gun and say you're sorry, like a gentleman. Damme"—Dick in his cups was notoriously quarrelsome and capricious as to the grounds of quarrel—"she's my sister, too, for that matter. And Jack's my brother: and begad, he has the right of it. He's a pragmatical fellow, but as plucky as ginger, and I love him for it. Fight him, you'll have to fight me—understand? So up and say you're sorry, like a man."

"Oh, if you're going to take that line, I'm willing enough." Mr. Congdon shuffled out an apology.

"*That's* right," Dick Ellison announced. "Now shake hands on it, like good fellows. Jack's as good a man as any of us for all his long coat."

"Excuse me," John interrupted coldly, "I have no wish to shake hands with any of you. I accept for my sister Mr. Congdon's assurance that he is ashamed of himself, and now you are at liberty to go your way."

"At liberty!" grumbled one: but, to Hetty's surprise, they went. Jack might not understand women: he could master men. For her part she thought he

might have shaken hands and parted in good-fellowship. She listened to the sportsmen's unsteady retreat. At a little distance they broke into defiant laughter, but discomfiture was in the sound.

"Come," said John. She took his arm and they walked on together towards Wroote.

For a while neither spoke. Hetty was thinking of a story once told her by her mother: how that once the Rector, then a young man, had been sitting in Smith's Coffee House in the City and discussing the "Athenian Gazette" with his fellow-contributors, when an officer of the Guards, in a box at the far end of the room, kept interrupting them with the foulest swearing. Mr. Wesley called to the waiter to bring a glass of water. It was brought. "Carry this," he said aloud, "to that gentleman in the red coat, and desire him to rinse his mouth after his oaths." The officer rose up in a fury, with hand on sword, but the gentlemen in his box pulled him down. "Nay, colonel, you gave the first offence. You know it is an affront to swear before a clergyman." The officer was restrained. Mr. Wesley resumed his talk. And her mother went on to tell that, years after, when the Rector was in London attending Convocation, a gentleman stopped him one day as he crossed St. James's Park. "Do you know me, Mr. Wesley?" "Sir, I have not that pleasure." "Will you know me, then, if I remind you that once, in Smith's Coffee House, you taught me a lesson? Since that time, sir, I thank God I have feared an oath and everything that is offensive to the Divine Majesty. I rejoiced, just now, to catch

sight of you, and could not refrain from expressing my gratitude."

And John inherited this gift of mastery. He could not understand women, nor could she ever understand him: but she felt that the arm she held was one of steel. To what end she and her sisters and her mother had been sacrificed she could not yet divine: but the encounter by the bridge had reawakened the Wesley pride in her, and she walked acquiescent in a fate beyond her ken. She knew, too, that he had dismissed the squabble from his mind and was thinking of her confession and her soul's danger. But here she would not help him.

"You have heard," she asked, "that we are leaving Lincoln?"

This was news to him.

"Yes; my husband thinks of opening a business in London: but first he must sell the shop and effects and pension off his father into lodgings at Louth. That is the old man's native home, and he wishes to end his days there. He is loth to leave the business; but truly he has brought it low, and we must move if William is to make his fortune."

"Moving to London will be a risk, and a heavy expense."

"Uncle Matthew is helping us, and it is settled that we move in the autumn. We go into lodgings at first, and shall live in the humblest way while we look about us for a good workshop and premises."

"Do you and your husband's father agree?"

"I at least try to please him. You would not call him

a pleasant old man : and of course he charges this new adventure down to my influence, whereas it is entirely William's notion. I have had nothing to do with it beyond enlisting uncle Matthew's help."

John glanced at her as though to read her face in the darkness. "Was that also William's notion?" he asked.

But here again he betrayed his ignorance. True woman, though she may have ceased to love her husband, or may never have loved him, will cover his weakness. "We have our ambitions, Jack, although to you they seem petty enough. You must make William's acquaintance. He has a great opinion of you. I believe, indeed, he thinks more of you than of me. And if he wishes to leave Lincoln for London, it is partly for my sake, that I may be happier in a great city where my fault is not known."

"If, as it seems, he thinks of your earthly comfort but neglects your soul's health, I shall not easily be friends with him."

By this time they were close to the garden gate.

"Is that you, Jack?" Charles's voice hailed over the dark hedge of privet.

The pair came to a halt. Hetty's eyes were fastened imploringly on her brother. He did not see them : if he had, it would have made no difference. He pitied her, but in his belief her repentance was not thorough : he had no right to invite her past the gate.

"Good-by," he whispered.

She understood. With a sob she bent her face and

kissed him and was gone like a ghost back into the darkness.

Charles met him at the gate. "Hullo," said he, "surely I heard voices? With whom were you talking?"

"With Hetty."

"Hetty?" Charles let out a whistle. "But it is about her I wanted to speak, here, before you go indoors. I say — where is she? Cannot we call her back?"

"No: we have no right. To some extent I have changed my mind about her: or rather, she has forced me to change it. Her soul is hardened."

"By whose fault?"

"No matter by whose fault: she must learn her responsibility to God. Father has been talking with you, I suppose."

"Yes: he is bitterly wroth — the more bitterly, I believe, because he loves you better than any of us. He says you have him at open defiance. 'Every day,' he cried out on me, 'you hear how he contradicts me, and takes your sister's part before my face. And now comes this sermon! He rebukes me in the face of my parish.' Mind you, I am not taking his part: if you stand firm, so will I. But I wanted to tell you this, that you may know how to meet him."

For a while the brothers paced the dark walks in silence. Under the falling dew the scent of honeysuckle lay heavy in the garden. Years later, in his country rides, a whiff from the hedgerow would arrest Charles as he pondered a hymn to the beat of his horse's hoofs, and carry him back to this hour. John's senses were less

acute, and all his thoughts for the moment turned inward.

"I have done wrong," he announced at length and walked hastily towards the house.

In the hall he met his father coming out.

"Sir," he said, "I have behaved undutifully. I have neglected you and set myself to contradict you. I was seeking you to beg your forgiveness."

To his amazement the Rector put a hand on either shoulder, stooped and kissed him.

"It was a heavy sorrow to me, Jack. Now I see that you are good at bottom; and to-morrow, if you wish, you shall write for me. Nay, come into the study now, and see the work that is ready for you."

In the light of the study lamp John saw that his father's eyes were wet.

## XVI

LATE in September, having been chosen to preach on St. Michael's Day in St. Michael's Church the sermon annually delivered by a Fellow of Lincoln, John travelled up to Oxford, whither Charles followed him a week or two later, to take up his residence in Christ Church and be matriculated on the first day of the October term.

John had deferred his journey to the last moment, in order to stand godfather to Nancy's healthy first-born. John Lambert — honest man and proud father — had honoured the event with a dinner, and very nearly wrecked his own domestic peace by sending out the invitations in his own hand and including Mr. and Mrs. Wright. For weeks after, Nancy shuddered to think what might have happened if Hetty and her father had come face to face at the ceremony or the feast. By good luck — or rather by using her common sense and divining the mistake — Hetty refused. Her husband, however, insisted on attending, and she let him go: with *his* presence the Rector could not decently quarrel.

"But look here," said he, "I am getting tired of the line the old man takes. It wasn't in our bond: he waited to spring it on me after the wedding. If I can

overlook things, he should be able to, and I've a mind to tell him so." He urged her to come. But Hetty pleaded that she could not: it was now past the middle of September, and her baby would be born early in the new year. "Well, well," he grumbled, "but 'tis hard to have married a lady, and a beauty to boot, and never a chance to show her." The speech was gracious, after his fashion, as well as honest: but she shivered inwardly. For as time wore on, she perceived this desire growing in him, to take her abroad and display her with pride. Failing this, he had once or twice brought his own cronies home, to sit and smoke with him while he watched their uneasy admiration and enjoyed the tribute. She blamed herself that she had not been more genial on those occasions; but in truth she dreaded them horribly. By sheer force of will she had managed hitherto, and with fair success, to view her husband as a good honest man, and overlook his defects of breeding. In her happiest moods she almost believed in the colours with which (poor soul, how eagerly!) she decked him. But she could not extend the illusion to his friends. "You shall show *him* off," she pleaded, meaning the unborn babe. "We will show him off together." But her face was white.

So William Wright had gone alone to the christening feast, and there John Wesley had met him for the first time, and talked with him, and afterwards walked home full of thought. For, in truth, Hetty's husband had drunk more of John Lambert's wine than agreed with him, and had asserted himself huskily, if not

aggressively, under the cold eye of Mr. Wesley senior. John, as godfather, had been called upon for a speech, and his brother-in-law's "Hear, hear" had been so vociferous that while his kinsfolk stole glances at one another as who should say, "But what can one expect?" the Rector put out a hand with grim mock apprehension and felt the leaded window casements. "I'll mend all I break, and for nothing," shouted Mr. Wright heartily: and amid a scandalized silence Charles exploded in merry laughter, and saved the situation.

For a fortnight after his return to Oxford, college work absorbed all John's leisure: but he found time as a matter of course to meet Charles on his arrival at the Angel Inn, and took him straight off to Christ Church to present him to the Senior Censor. Next day he called to find his brother installed in Peckwater, on the topmost floor, but in rooms very much more cheerful than the garret suggested by Mr. Sherman. Charles, at any rate, was delighted with them and his sticks of furniture, and elated — as thousands of undergraduates have been before his day and since — at exchanging school for college and qualified liberty and the dignity of housekeeping on one's own account.

"*Est aliquid quocunque loco, quocunque recessu,*" he quoted, and showed John with triumph the window-seat which, lifted, disclosed a cupboard to contain his wine, if ever he should possess any.

"Are you proposing to become a wine-bibber in your enthusiasm?" asked John.

Charles closed the lid, seated himself upon it, drew up his legs, and gazed out across the quadrangle. He had made a friend or two already among the freshmen, and this life seemed to him very good.

"My dear Jack, you would not have me be a saint all at once!"

John frowned. "You do not forget, I hope, in what hope you have been helped to Christ Church?"

Charles sat nursing his knees. A small frown puckered his forehead, but scarcely interfered with the good-tempered smile about his mouth.

"Others beside my father have helped or are willing to help. See that letter?"—he nodded towards one lying open on the table—"It is from Ireland. It has been lying in the porter's lodge for a week, and my scout brought it up this morning."

John picked it up, smiling at his boyish air of importance. "Am I to read it?"

Charles nodded, and while his brother read, gazed out of window. The smile still played about his mouth, but queerly.

"It is a handsome offer," said John slowly, and laid the letter down. "Have you taken any decision?"

"Father leaves it to me, as you know," Charles answered and paused, musingly. "I suppose, now, ninety-nine out of a hundred would jump at it."

"Assuredly."

"Somehow our family seems to be made up of odd hundredths. You, for example, do not wish me to accept."

"I have said nothing to influence your choice."

"No, my dear Jack, you have not. Yet I know what you think, fast enough."

John picked up the letter again and folded it carefully.

"An estate in Ireland; a safe seat in the Irish Parliament; and money. Jack, that money might help to make many happy. Think of our mother, often without enough to eat: think of father's debts. He knows I would pay them."

"And yet he has not tried to influence your choice."

"He's a Trojan, Jack; an old warhorse. You have cause to love him, for he loves you so much above all of us — and you know it — that, had the choice been offered you, he'd have moved heaven and earth to prevent your accepting a fortune."

He swung round, dropping his feet to the floor, and eyed his brother quizzically.

"Upon my word," he went on, "this thing annoys me. I've a mind to —" Here he dived a hand into his breeches pocket and fished out a shilling. "We'll settle it here and now, and you shall be witness. Heads for Dangan Castle and Parliament House; tails for poverty!"

He spun the coin and slapped it down on his knee. His hand still covered it.

"Come, Jack, stand up and be properly excited."

"Nay," said John; "would you jest with God's purpose for you?"

"I have seen you open the Bible at random and take your omen from the first words your eyes light on. Yet

I never accused you of jesting with Holy Writ. Cannot God as easily determine the fall of a coin?"

He withdrew his hand, and drew a deep breath. "Tails!" he announced, and faced his brother, smiling.

"I am in earnest," he said. "But if you prefer the other way —"

He stepped to the shelf, took down his Bible and opened it, not looking himself, but holding the page under his brother's eyes.

"Well, what does it say?" he asked.

"It says," John answered, "'Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.'"

Charles closed the Bible and restored it to its shelf; then faced his brother again, still with his inscrutable smile.

# BOOK IV

## I

"I NEVER knew you were such a needlewoman, Hetty; it has been nothing but stitch-stitch for these two hours — and the same yesterday, and the day before. See, the kettle's boiling. Lay down your sewing, that's a dear creature; make me a dish of tea, and while you're doing it, let me see your eyes and hear your voice."

Hetty dropped her hands on her lap and let them rest there for a moment, while she looked across at Charles with a smile.

"As for talking," she answered, "it seems to me you have been doing pretty well without my help."

Charles laughed. "Now you speak of it, I *have* been rattling on. But there has been so much to say and so little time to say it in. Has it occurred to you that we have seen more of each other in these seven days than in all our lives before?"

Seven days ago, while staying with his brother Sam at Westminster, he had heard of her arrival in London and had tramped through the slushy streets at once to seek her out at her address in Crown Court, Dean Street, Soho. She had welcomed him in this dark little second-

floor room — dwelling-room and bedroom combined — in which she was sitting alone; for her husband spent most of the day abroad on the business which had brought them to London, either superintending the alterations in the unfurnished premises he had hired in Frith Street for his shop and the lead-works by which he proposed to make his fortune, or in long discussions at Johnson's Court with uncle Matthew, who was helping with money and advice.

The lodgings in Crown Court were narrow enough and shut in by high walls. But Hetty had not inhabited them two hours before they looked clean and comfortable and even dainty. Her own presence lent an air of distinction to the meanest room.

Her face, her voice, her regal manners, her exquisitely tender smile, came upon Charles with the shock of discovery. These two had not seen one another for years. The date of this first call was December 22nd: then and there — with a shade of regret that in a few days he must leave London to pay Wroote a visit before his vacation closed — Charles resolved that she should not spend her Christmas uncheered. On Christmas Day he had carried her off with her husband to dine at Westminster with Mr. and Mrs. Sam Wesley. Mr. Wright had been on his best behaviour, Mrs. Sam unexpectedly gracious, and the meeting altogether a great success. Charles had walked home with the guests, and had called again the next afternoon. He could see that his visits gave Hetty the purest delight, and now that they must end, he, too, realized how pleasant they had been, and that he was going to miss them sorely.

"Only seven days?" he went on, musing. "I can hardly believe it; you have let me talk at such length — and I have been so happy."

Hetty clapped her hands together — an old girlish trick of hers. "It's I that have been happy! And not least in knowing that you will do us all credit." She knit her brows. "You are different from all the rest of us, Charles; I cannot explain how. But, sure, there's a Providence in it, that you, who are meant for different fortunes — "

"How different?"

"Why, you will take our kinsman's offer, of course. You will move in a society far above us — go into Parliament — become a great statesman — "

"My dear Hetty, what puts that into your head? I have refused."

"Refused!" She set down the kettle and gazed at him. "Is this John's doing?" she asked slowly.

"Why should it be John's doing?" He was nettled, and showed it. "I am old enough to make a choice for myself."

She paid no heed to this disclaimer. "They are perfectly ruthless," she went on.

"Who are ruthless?"

"Father and John. They would compass heaven and earth to make one proselyte; and the strange thing to me is that John at least does it in a cold mechanical way, almost as if his own mind stood outside of the process. Father is set on his inheriting Wroote and Epworth cures, John on saving his own soul; let them come to

terms or fight it out between them. But how can it profit Epworth or John's soul that they should condemn you, as they have condemned mother and all of us, to hopeless poverty? What end have they in view? Or have they any? For what service, pray, are you held in reserve?" She paused. "Somehow I think they will not wholly succeed, even though they have done this thing between them. You will fall on your feet; your face is one the world will make friends with. You may serve their purpose, but something of you — your worldly happiness, belike — will slip and escape from the mill-stones which have ground the rest of us to powder."

She picked up the kettle again and turned her back upon him while she filled the tea-pot at the small table. For the first time in their talks she had spoken bitterly.

"Nevertheless, I assure you, I refused of my own free will."

"Is there such a thing as free will in our family? I never detected it. As babes we were yoked to the chariot to drag Jack's soul up to the doors of salvation. I only rebelled, and — Charles, I am sorry, but not all penitent."

He ignored these last words. "You are quoting from Molly, I think. She and Jack seldom agree."

"Because, dear soul, she reads that Jack despises while he uses her. He looks upon her as the weak one in the team; he doubts she may break down on the road, and she, too, looks forward to it, though not with any fear."

"For some reason, father allows her to talk to him as no one else does — not even mother. Do you know that

one day last summer father and I were discussing Jack and the chance of his ever settling at Epworth; for this is in the old man's thoughts now, almost day and night. We were in the study by the window, and Molly at the table making a fair copy of the morning's work on Job; we did not think she heard us. All of a sudden she looked up and quoted 'Doth the hawk fly by *thy* wisdom and stretch her wings toward the south?' I supposed she was repeating it aloud from her manuscript, but father knew better and swung round upon her. 'Do you presume, then, to know whither or how far Jack will fly?' he demanded. She turned a queer look upon him, not flinching as I expected, and 'I shall see him,' she answered, using Balaam's words; 'I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh.' And with that she dropped her head and went on quietly with her writing. As for father, if you'll believe me, it simply dumfounded him; he hadn't a word."

"And I will tell you why. Once on a time that weak darling stood up for me to his face. She would not tell me what happened. But I believe that ever since father has been as nearly afraid of her as of anyone in the world. And now I want a promise. You say you have been happy in these talks of ours; and heaven knows I have been happier than for many a long day. Well, I want you to tell Molly about me — alone, remember — for of them all she only tried to help me, and believes in me still."

"Why, of course I shall."

"And," Hetty smiled, "they have no poet among them

now. You might send me some of your verses for a keepsake."

Charles grew suddenly red in the face. "Why — who told you?" he stammered.

"Oh, my dear," she laughed merrily, "one divines it! the more easily for having known the temptation."

He had set down his tea-cup and was standing up now, in his young confusion fingering the sewing she had laid aside.

"What is this you are doing?" he asked, with his eyes on the baby-linen; and though he uttered the first question that came into his head, and merely to cover his blushes, as he asked it the truth came to him, and he blushed more redly than ever.

Hetty blushed, too. She saw that he had guessed at length, but she saw him also clothed in a shining innocence. She felt suddenly that, though she might love him better, there were privacies she could not discuss with Charles as with John. And for a moment Charles seemed to her the more distant and mysterious of the two.

What she answered was — "We shall be following you back to Lincolnshire in a few days. I am to stay at Louth, in the house where William has found lodgings for his father — who was born at Louth, you know, and has now determined to end his days there. William will not be with me at first; he has to wind up the business at Lincoln and looks for some unpleasantness, as he has made himself responsible for all the old man's debts. I may even find my way to Wroote before facing Louth."

"To Wroote?"

"As a moth to the old cruel flame, dear. They will not take me in, but I know where to find a bedroom. Women have curious fancies at times; and I feel as if I may die very likely, and I want to see their faces first."

She stepped to him and kissed him hurriedly, hearing her husband's step on the stairs. "Remember to speak with Molly."

## II

### EXTRACTED FROM THE WESLEY CORRESPONDENCE

1\. *From Charles Wesley at Oxford to his brother John at Stanton in Gloucestershire*[1]

*January 20th*, 1727.

POOR sister Hetty! 'twas but a week before I left London that I knew she was at it. Little of that time, you may be sure, did I lose, being with her almost continually; I could almost envy myself the doat of pleasure I had crowded within that small space. In a little neat room she had hired did the good-natured, ingenuous, contented creature watch, and I talk, over a few short days which we both wished had been longer. As yet she lives pretty well, having but herself and honest W. W. to keep, though I fancy there's another a-coming. Brother Sam and sister are very kind to her, and I hope will continue so, for I have cautioned her never to contradict my sister, whom she knows. I'd like to have forgot she begs you'd write to her, at Mrs. Wakeden's in Crown Court, Dean Street, near Soho Square.

2\. *From Mary Wesley* (*Molly*) *to her brother Charles at Oxford* (*same date*)

YOU were very much mistaken in thinking I took ill you desiring my sister Emily to knit you another pair c

[1] Where John was staying on a vacation visit with his friend Robe Kirkham of Merton College, whose father held the cure of Stanton.

gloves. What I meant was to my brother Jack, because he gave her charge to look to my well-doing of his: but I desire you no more to mention your obligation to me for the gloves, for by your being pleased with them I am fully paid.

Dear brother, I beg you not to let the present straits you labour under to narrow your mind, or render you morose or churlish, but rather resign yourself and all your affairs to Him who best knows what is fittest for you, and will never fail to provide for whoever sincerely trusts in Him. I think I may say I have lived in a state of affliction ever since I was born, being the ridicule of mankind and reproach of my family; and I dare not think God deals hardly with me, and though He has set His mark upon me, I still hope my punishment will not be greater than I am able to bear; nay, since God is no respecter of persons, I must and shall be happier in that life than if I had enjoyed all the advantages of this.

My unhappy sister was at Wroote the week after you left us, where she stayed two or three days, and returned again to Louth without seeing my father. Here I must stop, for when I think of her misfortunes, I may say with Edgar, "O fortune! . . ."

3. *From Mary Wesley to her brother John. Sent at the same date*[1] *and under the same cover*

THOUGH I have not the good fortune to be one of your fa ourite sisters, yet I know you won't grudge the postage

[1] January 20th was Mrs. Wesley's birthday, and her children kept up the pretty observance of writing to one another on the anniversary.

now and then, which, if it can't be afforded, I desire that you will let me know, that I may trouble you no farther. I am sensible nothing I can say will add either to your pleasure or your profit; and that you are of the same mind is evidently shown by not writing when an opportunity offered. But why should I wonder at any indifference shown to such a despicable person as myself? I should be glad to find that miracle of nature, a friend which not all the disadvantages I labour under would hinder from taking the pains to cultivate and improve my mind; but since God has cut me off from the pleasurable parts of life, and rendered me incapable of attracting the love of my relations, I must use my utmost endeavour to secure an eternal happiness, and He who is no respecter of persons will require no more than He has given. You may now think that I am uncharitable in blaming my relations for want of affection, and I should readily agree with you had I not convincing reasons to the contrary; one of which is that I have always been the jest of the family — and it is not I alone who make this observation, for then it might very well be attributed to my suspicion — but here I will leave it and tell you some news.

Mary Owran was married to-day, and we only wanted your company to make us completely merry; for who can be sad where you are? Please get Miss Betsy[1] to buy me some silk to knit you another pair of gloves, and I don't doubt you will doubly like the colour for the buyer's sake.

[1] Miss Betty Kirkham, sister of Robert Kirkham.

My sister Hetty's child is dead, and your godson grows a lovely boy, and will, I hope, talk to you when he sees you: which I should be glad to do now.

4. *From Martha Wesley (Patty) to her brother John*

*Feb. 7th*, 1727.

I MUST confess you had a better opinion of me than I deserved: for jealousy did indeed suggest that you had very small kindness for me. When you sent the parcel to my sister Lambert, and wrote to her and sister Emme, and not to me, I was much worse grieved than before. Though I cannot possibly be so vain as to think that I do for my own personal merits deserve more love than my sisters, yet can you blame me if I sometimes wish I had been so happy as to have the first place in your heart?

Sister Emme is gone to Lincoln again, of which I'm very glad for her own sake; for she is weak and our misfortunes daily impair her health. Sister Kezzy, too, will have a fair chance of going. I believe if sister Molly stays long at home it will be because she can't get away. It is likely in a few years' time our family may be lessened — perhaps none left but your poor sister Martha, for whose welfare few are concerned.

My father has been at Louth to see sister Wright, who by good providence was brought to bed two days before he got thither; which perhaps might prevent his saying what he otherwise might have said to her; for none that deserves the name of man would say anything to grieve a woman in a condition where grief is often present death

to them. I fancy you have heard before now that her child is dead.

Of these letters but a faint echo reached Hetty as she lay in her bed at Louth — a few words transcribed by Charles from the one (No. 3) received by him, and sent with his affectionate inquiries. He added that Molly had also written to Jack, but to what effect he knew not; only that Jack, after reading it in his presence, had "pish'd" and pocketed it in a huff.

She lay in a darkened room, with her own hopes at their darkest — or rather, their blankest. She had journeyed to Wroote and from her humble lodging there had written an honest letter to her father, begging only to see her mother or Molly, promising to hold no communication with them if he refused. He had refused, in a curt note of three lines. From Wroote she returned to Louth, to face her trouble alone: for the preliminaries of selling the Lincoln business had brought old Wright's creditors about her husband's ears like a swarm of wasps. Until then they had waited with fair patience: but no sooner did he make a perfectly honest move towards paying them off in a lunp than the whole swarm took panic and he was forced to decamp to London to escape the sponging-house. There uncle Matthew came to the rescue, satisfied immediate claims, and guaranteed the rest. But meanwhile Hetty's child — a boy, as she had prayed — was born, and died on the third day afte birth.

She hardly dared to think of it — of the poor mite an

the hopes she had built on him. As she had told Charles, she was sorry, but not penitent — at least not wholly penitent. Once she had been wholly penitent: but the tyrannous compulsion of her marriage had eased or deadened her sense of responsibility. Henceforth she had no duty but to make the best of it. So she told herself, and had conscientiously striven to make the best of it. She had even succeeded, up to a point; by shutting herself within doors and busily, incessantly, spinning a life of illusion. She was a penitent — a woman in a book — redeeming her past by good conduct. The worst of it was that her husband declined to help the cheat. He was proud of her, honest man! and had no fancy at all for the *rôle* assigned to him, of "all for love, and the world well lost." That she refused to be shown off he set down to sulkiness; and went off of an evening to taverns and returned fuddled. She studied, above all things, to make home bright for him, and ever met him with a smile: and this was good enough, yet not (as it slowly grew clear to her) precisely what he wanted. So she had been driven to build fresh hopes on the unborn babe. *He* would make all the difference: would win his father back, or at worst give her own life a new foundation for hope. Her son should be a gentleman: she would deny herself and toil and live for him.

And now God had resumed His gift, and her life was blank indeed. She might have another — and another might die. She had never supposed that this one could die, and its death gave her a dreadful feeling of insecurity — as if no child of hers could ever be reared. What

then? The prospect of pardon by continued good conduct seemed to her shadowy indeed. Something more was needed. Yes, penitence was needed; real penitence: urgently she felt the need of it and yet for the life of her could not desire it as she knew it ought to be desired.

She turned from the thought and let her mind dwell on the sentence or two quoted by Charles from Molly's letter. They were peevish sentences, and she did not doubt that the letter to John had been yet more peevish. Life had taught her what some never learn, that folks are not to be divided summarily into good and bad, right and wrong, pleasant and unpleasant. Men and women are not always refined or ennobled by unmerited suffering. They are soured often, sometimes coarsened. Hetty loved Molly far better than she loved John: but in a flash she saw that, not Molly only, but all her sisters who had suffered for John's advancement, would exact the price of their sacrifices in a consuming jealousy to be first in his favour. She saw it so clearly that she pitied him for what would worry him incessantly and be met by him with a patient conscientiousness. He would never understand — could never understand — on what these jealous sisters of his based their claims.

She saw it the more closely because she had no care of her own to stand first with him. She smiled and stretched out an arm along the pillow where the babe was not. Then suddenly she buried her face in it and wept, and being weak, passed from tears into sleep.

## III

MOLLY'S protest against the tyranny of home had long since passed into a mere withholding of assent. She went about her daily task more dutifully than ever. She had always been the household drudge: but now she not only took over all the clerical work upon the *Dissertationes in Librum Jobi* (for the Rector's right hand was shaken by palsy and the drawings occupied more and more of Johnny Whitelamb's time); she devised new schemes for eking out the family income. She bred poultry. With Johnny's help — he was famous with the spade — she added half an acre to the kitchen-garden and planted it. The summer of 1727 proved one of the rainiest within men's memory, and floods covered the face of the country almost to the parsonage door. "I hope," wrote the Rector to John on June 6th, "I may be able to serve both my cures this summer, or if not, die pleasantly in my last dyke." On June 21st he could "make shift to get from Wroote to Epworth by boat." Five days later he was twisted with rheumatism as a result of his Sunday journey to Epworth and back, "being lamed with having my breeches too full of water, partly with a downpour from a thunder-shower, and partly from the wash over the boat. Yet I thank God I was able to preach here in the afternoon.

I wish the rain had not reached us on this side Lincoln, but we have it so continual that we have scarce one bank left, and I can't possibly have one quarter of oats in all the levels; but thanks be to God the field-barley and rye are good. We can neither go afoot nor horseback to Epworth, but only by boat as far as Scawsit Bridge and then walk over the common, though I hope it will soon be better."

That week the floods subsided, and on July 4th he wrote again: "My hide is tough, and I think no carrion can kill me. I walked sixteen miles yesterday; and this morning, I thank God, I was not a penny worse. The occasion of this booted walk was to hire a room for myself at Epworth, which I think I have done. You will find your mother much altered. I believe what would kill a cat has almost killed her. I have observed of late little convulsions in her very frequently, which I don't like."

This report frightened John, who wrote back urgently for further particulars. Mrs. Wesley had indeed fallen into a low state of health, occasioned partly (as Kezzy declared in a letter) by "want of clothes or convenient meat," partly by the miasma from the floods. Ague was the commonest of maladies in the Isle of Axholme, and even the labourers fortified themselves against it with opium.

"Dear son John," replied the Rector sardonically, "we received last post your compliments of condolence and congratulation to your mother on the supposition of her near approaching demise, to which your sister Patty

will by no means subscribe; for she says she is not so good a philosopher as you are, and that she can't spare her mother yet, if it please God, without great inconveniency. And indeed, though she has now and then some very sick fits, yet I hope the sight of you would revive her. However, when you come you will see a new face of things, my family being now pretty well colonized, and all perfect harmony — much happier, in no small straits, than perhaps we ever were in our greatest affluence."

Molly, while she helped to cook the miserable meals which could not tempt her mother's appetite, or looked abroad upon the desolate floods, saw with absolute clearness that this apparent peace was but the peace of exhaustion. Yet it was true that — thanks to her — the pinch of poverty had relaxed. The larger debts were paid: for some months she had not opened the door to a dunning tradesman. The floods, as by a miracle, had spared her crops and she had a scheme for getting her surplus vegetables conveyed to Epworth market. Already she had opened up a trade in fowls with a travelling dealer. "Molly," wrote her father, "miraculously gets money even in Wroote, and has given the first fruit of her earning to her mother, lending her money, and presenting her with a new cloak of her own buying and making, for which God will bless her."

Her secret dissent did not escape the Rector's eye, so alert for every sign of defiance: but in his expanding sense of success he let it pass. There was another,

however, who divined it and watched it anxiously day after dreary day, for it answered a trouble in his own breast.

Johnny Whitelamb was now almost a man grown: but what really separated him from the Johnny Whitelamb of two years ago was no increase in stature or in knowledge. That which grew within him, and still grew, defying all efforts to kill it, was — a doubt. It had been born in him — no bigger then than a grain of mustard-seed — on the day when he sought Hetty to send her to the house where William Wright waited for her answer. Until then the Rector had been to him a divine man, in wisdom and goodness very little lower than the angels. And now —

He fought it hard, at first in terror, at length in cold desperation. But still the doubt grew. And the worst was that Molly guessed his secret. He feared to meet her eye. It seemed to him that he and she were bound in some monstrous conspiracy. He spent hours in wrestling with it. At times he would rise from table on some stammered excuse, rush off to the fields and there, in a hidden corner, fall on his knees and pray, or even lie at full length, his face hidden in the grasses, his body writhing, his ungainly legs twisting and untwisting. And still the doubt grew.

Everything confirmed it. He saw the suffering by which mother and daughters were yoked. He noted the insufficient food, the thin clothing, the wan cheeks, the languid tread. He no longer took these for granted, but looked into their causes. And the Rector's blind-

ness to them, or indifference, became a terror to him — a thing inhuman.

He began to think him mad. Worse, he began to hate him: he, Johnny Whitelamb, who had taken everything at his hands — food, clothing, knowledge, even his faith in God! He accused himself for a monster of ingratitude, whose sins invited the sky to fall and blot him out. And still he could not meet Molly's eyes: still, in spite of checks and set-backs, the doubt grew.

It was almost at its worst one morning in late August, when the Rector invited him to lay by his drawings and walk beside him as far as Froddingham, where he had business to transact. (It was to pay over £5, and meet a note given by him in the spring to keep Charles in pocket money.) Had Johnny been in a more charitable mood, the accent in which the old man proffered the invitation would have struck him as pathetic. For the Rector it was indeed a rare confession of weakness. But three weeks before his purblind nag Mettle had stumbled, flung him, trailed him a few yards on the ground with one foot in the stirrup, and come to a standstill with one hoof planted blunderingly on his other foot. It had been a narrow escape, had caused him excruciating pain, and he limped still. To walk, even with a stick, was impossible. But the money must be paid at Froddingham and he would trust no messenger. So he mounted the mare, Bounce, and set forth at a foot-pace, with Johnny striding alongside and noting how the white palsied hand shook on the rein. Johnny noted it without pity: for the doubt was awake and clamorous.

If ever he hated his benefactor he hated him that morning.

The morning was gray, with a blusterous south-west wind of more than summer strength; and the floods had subsided, but the Trent, barely contained within its banks, was running down on a fierce ebb-tide. They reached Althorpe, and while waiting for the horse-boat to cross to Burringham, Johnny found time to wonder at the force of two or three gusts which broke on the lapping water and drove it like white smoke against the bows of a black keel, wind-bound and anchored in mid-channel about fifty yards down-stream.

It turned out that the ferryman, who worked the horse-boat with his eldest son, had himself walked over to Bottesford earlier in the morning: and Johnny felt some uneasiness at finding his place supplied by a boy scarcely fourteen. Mr. Wesley, however, seemed in no apprehension, but coaxed Bounce to embark and stood with her amidships, holding her bridle, as the boat was pushed off. Johnny took his seat, fronting the elder lad, who pulled the stern oar.

They started in a lull of the wind. Johnny's first thought of danger had never been definite, and he had forgotten it — was busy in fact with the doubt — when, halfway across, one of the white squalls swooped down on them and the youngster in the bows, instead of pulling for dear life, dropped his oar with a face of panic.

Johnny felt the jerk, heard the Rector's cry of warning, and in two seconds (he never knew how) had leapt over the stern oar, across the thwarts, past the kicking and

terrified Bounce — with whom the Rector was struggling as she threatened to leap overboard, and reached the bows in time to snatch the oar as it slipped over the side. But it had snapped both the thole-pins short off in their sockets and was useless. The boat's nose fell off and they were swept down towards the anchored hulk below. Johnny could only wait for the crash, and he waited: and in those few instants — the doubt being still upon him — bethought him that likely enough the Rector could not swim, or would be disabled by his lameness. And . . . was he sorry? He had not answered this question when the crash came, the ferry-boat striking the very stem of the keel, her gunwale giving way to it with a slow grinding noise, then with a bursting crack as the splinters broke inwards. As it seemed to him, there were two distinct bumps, and between them the boat filled slowly and the mare slid away into the water. He heard voices shouting on board the keel. The water rose to his knees and he sank in it, almost on top of Mr. Wesley. At once he felt the whirl of the current, but not before he had gripped the Rector's collar. The other hand he flung up blindly. By Providence the keel was freighted with sea-coal and low in the water, and as the pair slid past, Johnny's fingers found and gripped the bulwark-coaming. So for a half minute he hung — his body and the Rector's trailing out almost on the surface with the force of the water, his arm almost dislocated by the strain — until a couple of colliers came running to help and hauled them on board, the Rector first. They had gripped the small boy as the boat sank, and he stood in the bows

scared and dripping, but otherwise nothing the worse. His brother, it appeared, could swim like a fish and was already a good hundred yards down-stream, not fighting the current, but edging little by little for the home shore. And astern of him battled the mare.

The colliers had a light boat on deck, but with it even in calm water they could have done little to help the poor creature, and on such a stream it was quite useless. They stood watching and discussing her as she turned from time to time, either as the tide carried her or in vain, wild efforts to stem it: the latter, probably, for after some ten minutes (by which time her head had diminished to a black speck in the distance) she seemed to learn wisdom from the example of the swimmer ahead, resisted no longer, and was finally cast ashore and caught by him more than half a mile below.

Johnny, seated on the grimy deck, heard the colliers discussing her struggles, but took no concern in them. His eyes were all for the Rector, who, after the first fit of coughing, lay and panted against his knees, with gaze fastened on the steel-gray sky above.

He had saved his life. But had he really desired to? The action had been instinctive merely: and a moment before he had been speculating on the Rector's death, assenting, almost hoping. Had he translated that assent into deed—had he been given time to obey the wicked whisper in his heart—he would now be the blackest criminal under heaven. God had interposed to save him from this; but was he any the less a sinner in intent?

How had he come to harbour the thought? For now

again it was to him unthinkable as of old — yet in his madness he had thought it. There abode the memory, never to be escaped. He looked down on the venerable face, the water-drops yet trickling from the brow, usually tinted with exposure to sun and wind but now pale as old ivory. The old adoration, the old devotion, surged back into Johnny's heart, the tide rose to his eyes and overflowed. "My master!" he groaned, "my master!" and a tear fell upon Mr. Wesley's hand.

Whether or not this aroused him, the old man sat up at once and looked about him. He showed no emotion at all.

"Where is the mare?" he asked.

One of the keelmen pointed down-stream, and the little party stared after her in silence until she staggered up the bank.

"All saved?" asked Mr. Wesley again. "My friends, before you put me ashore, I will ask you to kneel with me and give thanks for God's mercy to me a sinner." The men stared at him and at one another, not a little embarrassed. But seeing the Rector and Johnny already on their knees in the grime, they pulled off their caps sheepishly and knelt: and after a moment the frightened youngster in the bows followed suit.

"Almighty God, who aforetime didst uphold thy great apostle in shipwreck and bring him safe to land, and hast now again interposed an arm to succour two of this company and me, the unworthiest of Paul's successors; though our merits be as nothing in comparison with his, and as nothing the usefulness whereto Thou

hast preserved us, we bless Thee that Thy mercy is high and absolute, respecting not persons; we thank Thee for giving back the imperfect lives Thou mightest in justice have brought to an end; and we entreat Thee for grace so to improve the gift as through it to receive more fitly the greater one of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our soul's Saviour. Amen."

He knelt for a minute, praying silently; then arose, dusted his knees and professed himself ready to be rowed ashore. The keelmen slid their deck-boat overside, and presently all embarked and were tided back to shore, the boat taking ground about fifty yards above the bend where Bounce stood shivering, caked in mud to her withers.

The Rector thanked the keelmen in few words while Johnny ran to fetch the mare. They were pulling back when he returned with her. The elder lad invited Mr. Wesley to the ferryman's cottage, to sit and dry his clothes: but he declined.

Johnny helped him to remount. Scarcely a word passed on their homeward way beyond a comment or two on poor Bounce, who had strained her near shoulder in her plunging battle for life and was all but exhausted. At the parsonage door they parted, still in silence, and Johnny led the mare off to stable. He did not know if Mr. Wesley had observed his emotion, and his own heart was too full of love and remorse for any words.

But an hour later word came to him by Kezzy that her father wished to speak with him in the study. He

went at once, wondering, and found the Rector seated as usual before his manuscripts, but alone.

"My lad," he began kindly, "you saved my life to-day."

Johnny attempted to speak, but could not.

"I know what you would say. We owe one another something, eh? But this is a debt which I choose to acknowledge at once. None the less I wish you to understand that although your conduct to-day hastens my proposal, it has been in my head for some time. Whitelamb, would you like to go to Oxford?"

Johnny gasped. "Sir — sir!" he stammered.

Mr. Wesley smiled. "I will speak to Jack: I think it can be managed if he will take you for his pupil, as no doubt he will. You cannot well be poorer than I was on the day when I entered my name at Exeter College. There, go away and think it over. There's no hurry, you understand: if you are to go, I must first of all hammer some Greek into you — eh? What is it?"

For Johnny had cast himself on his knees, and was sobbing aloud.

At supper Molly, to whom her mother had whispered the news, announced it to her sisters, who knew only of the accident and Johnny's hand in the rescue.

"Yes," said she, "we are all proud of him, and shall be prouder before long, when he goes to Oxford!"

"Why to Oxford?" asked Patty, not comprehending, and sought her mother's eyes for the interpretation. Mrs. Wesley smiled.

"Why, to be a great man," Molly went on; "perhaps in time as great as Jack or Charles." Johnny, in his usual seat by the chimney-corner, detected the challenge in her tone, but did not look up.

"Is it true?" persisted Patty. He stared into the fire, blushing furiously.

"It is true." Mrs. Wesley rose, and stepping to him laid a hand on his straggling dark hair. "What is more, he has deserved it, not to-day only but by his goodness over many years. The Lord shall be his illumination," she said gravely, quoting the motto of the University which (amazing thought!) was to be *his* University. "May the light of His countenance rest upon you, dear son."

She had never called him by that title before. He caught her hand and for the moment, in the boldness of a great love, clasped it between his own. Now he could look across at Molly: and she nodded back at him, her eyes brimful — but behind her tears they gave him absolution and released him from the doubt.

## IV

THIS was at the close of August, 1728, and the Rector's letter entreating his good offices for Johnny Whitelamb reached John Wesley on the eve of his taking Priest's Orders, for which he was then preparing at Oxford. He was ordained priest on September 22nd, and a week later had news from William Wright in London that Hetty's third child was born — and was dead.

This is how the father announced his loss:

"*To the Rev$^{d}$ Mr. John Wesley, Fellow in Christ Church College, Oxon*"

John smiled at the superscription, inaccurate in more ways than one.

"DEAR BRO: This comes to Let you know that my wife is brought to bed and is in a hopefull way of Doing well but the Dear child Died — the Third day after it was born — which has been of great concerne to me and my wife She Joyns With me In Love to your selfe and Bro: Charles. From Your Loveing Bro: to Comnd —

"WM. WRIGHT.

"P.S. I've sen you Sum Verses that my wife maid of Dear Lamb Let me hear from one or both of you as Soon as you think Convenient."

And these are Hetty's verses inclosed.

"*A Mother's Address to Her Dying Infant*

"Tender softness, infant mild,
Perfect, purest, brightest Child!
Transient lustre, beauteous clay,
Smiling wonder of a day!
Ere the last convulsive start
Rend thy unresisting heart,
Ere the long-enduring swoon
Weigh thy precious eyelids down,
Ah, regard a mother's moan!
— Anguish deeper than thy own.

"Fairest eyes, whose dawning light
Late with rapture blest my sight,
Ere your orbs extinguish'd be,
Bend their trembling beams on me!

"Drooping sweetness, verdant flower
Blooming, withering in an hour,
Ere thy gentle breast sustain
Latest, fiercest, mortal pain,
Hear a suppliant! Let me be
Partner in thy destiny:
That whene'er the fatal cloud
Must thy radiant temples shroud;
When deadly damps, impending now,
Shall hover round thy destin'd brow,
Diffusive may their influence be,
And with the blossom blast the tree!"

Mr. Wright inclosed these verses complacently enough. Poetry in his eyes was an elegant accomplishment vaguely connected with scholarship and gentility: and he took pride in possessing a wife who,

as he more than once assured his cronies in the parlour of the Turk's Head at the end of the street, could sit down and write it by the yard.

To please Hetty he read them through, pronounced them very pretty, and folded up the paper, remarking, "I'll send it off to your brother John. He likes this sort of thing, and when he learns 'twas written in your weak state he'll think it wonderful."

Of the anguish in the closing lines his eye detected, his ear heard, nothing.

Yet it was an anguish which daily touched despair in Hetty's heart. God had laid a curse on her, and would not be placated by the good behaviour on which she had built her hopes. She had borne three children, and not one had He suffered to live for a week. No matter how many she might bear, the same fate stood ready for them. Nor was this all. She saw Him smiting, through these innocent babes, at her husband's love. Little by little she felt it relaxing and sinking through carelessness into neglect: and the whole scheme of her atonement rested on his continuing fondness. She had never loved him, but his love was, if not infinitely precious, of infinite moment to her. She needed it to sustain her and keep her in the right way. She omitted no small attentions which might make home pleasant to him. She kept the house bright (they had moved into Frith Street and lived over the shop), and unweariedly coaxed his appetite with her cookery, in which — and especially in pastry-making — she had a born gift. The fumes of the lead-works at the back often took her own appetite away and depressed

her spirits, but she never failed to rouse herself and welcome him with a smile. Also (but this was to please herself) sometimes by a word of advice in the matter of toilet or of clothes, oftener by small secret attentions with the needle, she had gradually reformed his habits of dress until now he might pass for a London tradesman of the superior class, decently attired, well shaven and clean in his person. He resigned himself to these improvements with much good nature and so passed through his metamorphosis almost without knowing it. She practised small economies too; and he owned (though he set it down to his own industry) that his worldly affairs were more prosperous than ever they had been before his marriage. But the fumes of the lead-works affected *his* appetite, too, and his spirits: and when these flag a man has an easy and specious remedy in brandy-and-water. By-and-by it became a habit with him, when his men ceased work, to stroll down to the Turk's Head for a "stiffener" before his meal. The men he met there respected him for a flourishing tradesman and flattered him. He adored his wife still. In his eyes no woman would compare with her. But there was no denying he felt more at home in company which allowed him to tell or listen to a coarse story and stretch his legs and boast at his ease.

He was not aware of any slackening in affection. But Hetty noted it and fought against it, though with a sinking heart. She had counted on this babe to draw him back — if not to her, then at least to home. When told that it was dead, on an impulse she had turned her face at once to him and with a heartrending look appealed

for his forgiveness. He did not understand. Yet he behaved well, stroking her head and saying what he could to comfort her.

She was convinced now that she lay under God's curse, and by-and-by her weak thoughts connected this curse with her father's displeasure. If she could move her father to relent, it might be lifted from her. And so after many weeks of brooding she found courage to write this letter:

*From Hetty to her Father*

HONOURED SIR,—Although you have cast me off and I know that a determination once taken by you is not easily moved, I must tell you that some word of your forgiving is not only necessary to me, but would make happier the marriage in which, as you compelled it, you must still (I think) feel no small concern. My child, on whose frail help I had counted to make our life more supportable to my husband and myself, is dead. Should God give and take away another, I can never escape the thought that my father's intercession might have prevailed against His wrath, which I shall then, alas! take to be manifest.

Forgive me, sir, that I make you a party in such happiness (or unhappiness) as the world generally allows to be, under God, a portion for two. But as you planted my matrimonial bliss, so you cannot run away from my prayer when I beseech you to water it with a little kindness. My brothers will report to you what they have seen of my way of life and my daily struggle to redeem

the past. But I have come to a point where I feel your forgiveness to be necessary to me. I beseech you, then, not to withhold it, and to believe me your obedient daughter,

MEHET. WRIGHT.

*The Answer*

DAUGHTER,—If you would persuade me that your penitence is more than feigned, you are going the wrong way to work. I decline to be made a party to your matrimonial fortunes, as you claim in what appears to be intended for the flower of your letter; and in your next, if you would please me, I advise you to display less wit and more evidence of honest self-examination. To that —which is the beginning of repentance—you do not appear to have attained. Yet it would teach you that your troubles, if you have any, flow from your own sin, and that for any inconveniences you may find in marriage you are probably as much to blame (at the very least) as your honest husband. Your brothers speak well of him, and I shall always think myself obliged to him for his civilities to you.

But what are your troubles? You do not name them. What hurt has matrimony done you? I know only that it has given you a good name. I do not remember that you were used to have so frightful an idea of it as you have now. Pray be more explicit. Restrain your wit if you wish to write again, and I will answer your next if I like it. Your father,

S. WESLEY.

On receiving this Hetty could not at once bethink her of having given any cause of offence. But she had kept

a rough copy of her letter, and on studying it was fairly shocked by its tone, which now seemed to her almost flippant.

She marvelled at her maladroitness, which was the more singular because she had really written under strong emotion. She did not even now guess the secret of her failure; which was, that she had written entreating forgiveness of one whom she had not wholly forgiven. Nevertheless she tried again.

*Hetty to her Father*

HONOURED SIR,—Though I was glad, on any terms, of the favour of a line from you, yet I was concerned at your displeasure on account of the unfortunate paragraph which you are pleased to say was meant for the flower of my letter. I wish it had not gone, since I perceive it gave you some uneasiness.

But since what I said occasioned some queries, which I should be glad to speak freely about, I earnestly beg that the little I shall say may not be offensive to you, since I promise to be as little witty as possible, though I can't help saying you accuse me of being too much so; especially these late years past I have been pretty free from that scandal.

You ask me what hurt matrimony has done me, and whether I had always so frightful an idea of it as I have now? Home questions, indeed! and I once more beg of you not to be offended at the least I can say to them, if I say anything.

I had not always such notions of wedlock as now, but

thought that where there was a mutual affection and desire of pleasing, something near an equality of mind and person, either earthly or heavenly wisdom, and anything to keep love warm between a young couple, there was a possibility of happiness in a married state; but when all, or most of these, were wanting, I ever thought people could not marry without sinning against God and themselves.

You are so good to my spouse and me as to say you shall always think yourself obliged to him for his civilities to me. I hope he will always continue to use me better than I deserve in one respect.

*I think exactly the same of my marriage as I did before it happened;* but though I would have given at least one of my eyes for the liberty of throwing myself at your feet before I was married at all, yet, since it is past and matrimonial grievances are usually irreparable, I hope you will condescend to be so far of my opinion as to own that, since upon some accounts I am happier than I deserve, it is best to say little of things quite past remedy, and endeavour, as I really do, to make myself more and more contented, though things may not be to my wish.

Though I cannot justify my late indiscreet letter, yet I am not more than human, and if the calamities of life sometimes wring a complaint from me, I need tell no one that though I bear I must feel them. And if you cannot forgive what I have said, I sincerely promise never more to offend by saying too much; which (with begging your blessing) is all from your most obedient daughter,

MEHETABEL WRIGHT.

## V

YOU who can read between the lines of these letters will have remarked a new accent in Hetty — a hard and bitter accent. She will suffer her punishment now; but, even though it be sent of God, she will appeal against it as too heavy for her sin.

Learn now the cause of it and condemn her if you can.

At first when her husband, at the close of his day's work, sidled off to the Turk's Head, she pretended not to remark it. Indeed her fears were long in awaking. In all her life she had never tasted brandy, and knew nothing of its effects. That Dick Ellison fuddled himself upon it was notorious, and on her last visit to Wroote she had heard scandalous tales of John Romley, who had come to haunt the taverns in and about Epworth, singing songs and soaking with the riff-raff of the neighbourhood until turned out at midnight to roll homeward to his lonely lodgings. She connected drunkenness with uproarious mirth, boon companionship, set orgies. Of secret unsocial tippling she had as yet no apprehension.

Even before the birth of his second child the tavern had become necessary to Mr. Wright, not only at the close of work but in the morning, between jobs. His

workmen began to talk. He suspected them and slid into foolish, cunning tricks to outwit them, leaving the shop on false excuses, setting out ostentatiously in the wrong direction and doubling back on the Turk's Head by a side street. They knew where to find him, however, when a customer dropped in.

"Who sent you here?" he demanded furiously, one day, of the youngest apprentice, who had come for the second time that week to fetch him out of the King's Oak. (He had enlarged his circle of taverns by this time, and it included one half of Soho.)

"Please you, I wasn't sent here at all," the boy stammered. "I tried the Turk's Head first and then the Three Tuns."

"And what should make you suppose I was at either? Look here, young man, the workshop from Robinson down" — Robinson was the foreman — "is poking its nose too far into my business. If this goes on, one of these days Robinson will get his dismissal and you the strap."

"It wasn't Robinson sent me, sir. It was the mistress."

"Eh!" William Wright came to a halt on the pavement and his jaw dropped.

"Her uncle, Mr. Matthew, has called and wants to see you on particular business."

The business, as it turned out, was merely to give him quittance of a loan. The sum first advanced to them by Matthew Wesley had proved barely sufficient. To furnish the dwelling rooms in Frith Street he had

lent another £10 and taken a separate bond for it, and this debt Hetty had discharged out of her household economies, secretly planning a happy little surprise for her husband; and now in the hurry of innocent delight she betrayed her sadder secret.

She had as yet no fear of him, though he was afraid of her. But at sight of him as he entered, all the joy went out of her announcement.

He listened sulkily, took the receipt, and muttered some ungracious thanks. Old Matthew eyed him queerly, and, catching a whiff of brandy, pulled out his gold watch. The action may have been involuntary. The hour was half-past ten in the morning.

"Well, well — I must be going. Excuse me, nephew Wright; with my experience I ought to have known better than to withdraw a busy man from his work."

He glanced at Hetty, with a look which as good as asked leave for a few words with her in private. But Mr. Wright, now thoroughly suspicious, did not choose to be dismissed in this fashion. So after a minute or two of uneasy talk the old man pulled out his watch again, excused himself, and took his departure.

"Look here," began Mr. Wright when he and Hetty were left alone: "you are taking too much on yourself."

He had never spoken to her quite so harshly.

"I am sorry, William," she answered, keeping her tears well under control. For months she had been planning her little surprise, and its failure hurt her cruelly. "I had no thought of displeasing you."

"Oh, I dare say you meant it for the best. But I

choose to be master in my own house, that's all. Another time, if you have more money than you know what to do with, just come and consult me. I've no notion of being made to look small before your uncle, and I don't stomach it."

He turned away growling. He had spoken only of the repaid loan, but they both knew that this had nothing to do with his ill temper.

At the door he faced round again. "What were you talking about when I came in?" he asked suspiciously.

"Uncle was congratulating us. He is delighted to know that the business is doing so well and complains that he seldoms gets sight of you nowadays, your hands are so full."

"And pray what the devil has it to do with him, how I spend my time?" He pulled himself up on the oath, and seeing her cheek flush, he too reddened, but went on, if anything, more violently. "You've a trick in your family of putting your fingers into other folks' pies: you're known for it. There's that Holy Club I hear about. Your clever brothers can't be content, any more than your father, to let honest folks alone, but are for setting right the whole University of Oxford. I warn you, that won't do with me. 'Live and let live' is my motto: let me alone and I'll let you alone. You Wesleys think mightily of yourselves, but you're neither king nor Parlyment, and that I'll have you learn."

It was not a dignified exit and he knew it: by brooding over it through the afternoon his temper grew more savage. That evening he spent at the Turk's Head and

slouched home at midnight divided between contrition and bravado.

Hetty was in bed, pretending sleep. Had she known it, a word from her might have mended matters. Even had he found her in tears there was enough good nature in the man to have made him relent.

At sight of her beautiful face he felt half-inclined to awake her and have the quarrel cleared up. But, to begin with, he was not wholly certain of his sobriety. And she, too, distrusted it. He had wounded her family pride, to be sure: but what really kept her silent was the dread of discovering him to be drunk and letting him see that she had discovered it.

Yet she had great need of tears: for on more than one account she respected her husband, even liked him, and did most desperately long to be loved by him. After all, she had borne him children: and since they had died he was her only stay in the world, her only hope of redemption. Years after there was found among her papers a tear-blotted sheet of verses dating from this sorrowful time: and though the sorrow opens and shows ahead, as in a flash, the contempt towards which the current is sweeping her, you see her travel down to it with hands bravely battling, clutching at the weak roots of love and hope along the shore:

"O thou whom sacred rites design'd
My guide and husband ever kind,
My sovereign master, best of friends,
On whom my earthly bliss depends:
If e'er thou didst in Hetty see

Aught fair or good or dear to thee,
If gentle speech can ever move
The cold remains of former love,
Turn thou at last — my bosom ease,
Or tell me *why* I fail to please.

"Is it because revolving years,
Heart-breaking sighs, and fruitless tears
Have quite deprived this form of mine
Of all that once thou fancied'st fine?
Ah no! what once allured thy sight
Is still in its meridian height.
Old age and wrinkles in this face
As yet could never find a place;
A youthful grace informs these lines
Where still the purple current shines,
Unless by thy ungentle art
It flies to aid my wretched heart:
Nor does this slighted bosom show
The many hours it spends in woe.

"Or is it that, oppress'd with care,
I stun with loud complaints thine ear,
And make thy home, for quiet meant,
The seat of noise and discontent?
Ah no! Thine absence I lament
When half the weary night is spent,
Yet when the watch, or early morn,
Has brought me hopes of thy return,
I oft have wiped these watchful eyes,
Conceal'd my cares and curb'd my sighs
In spite of grief, to let thee see
I wore an endless smile for thee.

"Had I not practised every art,
To oblige, divert, and cheer thy heart,
To make me pleasing in thine eyes,
And turn thy house to paradise,
I had not ask'd 'Why dost thou shun

These faithful arms, and eager run
To some obscure, unclean retreat,
With vile companions glad to meet,
Who, when inspired by beer, can grin
At witless oaths and jests obscene,
Till the most learnèd of the throng
Begins a tale of ten hours long
To stretch with yawning other jaws,
But thine in rapture of applause?'

"Deprived of freedom, health, and ease,
And rivall'd by such *things* as these,
Soft as I am, I'll make thee see
I will not brook contempt from thee!
I'll give all thoughts of patience o'er
(A gift I never lost before);
Indulge at once my rage and grief,
Mourn obstinate, disdain relief,
Till life, on terms severe as these,
Shall ebbing leave my heart at ease;
To thee thy liberty restore
To laugh when Hetty is no more."

One morning William Wright awoke out of stertorous sleep with a heavy sense of something amiss, and opened his eyes to find Hetty standing beside the bed in night-gown and light wrapper, with a tray and pot of tea which she had stolen downstairs to prepare for him. After a second or two he remembered, and turned his face to the wall.

"No," said she, "you had better sit up and drink this, and we can talk honestly. See, I have brought a cup for myself, too."

She drew a small table close to the bed, and a chair, poured out the tea and seated herself — all with the least possible fuss.

"I suppose you know," she began, "that you struck me last night?"

His hand trembled as he took the cup, and again he turned away his eyes.

"You were drunk," she went on. "You called me by an evil name, too — a name I once called myself: but a name you would not have called me in your sober senses. At least, I think not. Tell me — and remember that you promised always to answer honestly: you would not have called me so in your sober senses? You do not think of me so?"

He set down the cup and stretched out a hand.

"My lass" — the words seemed to choke him.

"For I am not *that*. You married me knowing the worst; and ever since I have been a true wife to you. Well, I see that you are sorry. And you struck me, on the breast. I have a bruise there; but," she went on in a level lifeless tone, "there is no child to see his father's mark. You are sorry for that, too. But I understand, of course, that you were drunk. Many times now you have come home drunk, and next morning I pretended not to know it. I must not pretend now, since now to be clear about it is my only chance of comfort and your only chance of self-respect."

He groaned.

"Lass, I could cut my hand off for it! When a man gets overtaken —"

"No, no," her voice suddenly grew animated; "for God's sake, William, don't cry over it! You are not a David." She shivered, as a trick of memory brought back

to her the night in the harvest field when she had broken out in wrath against her least admired of Biblical heroes — the same night on which she had first set eyes on this man whose ring, and whose bruise, she wore.

"Do not use cheating words, either," she went on. "You were not overtaken by liquor; you went out to meet it, as you have gone night after night. Call it by the straight name. Listen: I like you well enough, William, to help you, if I can — indeed, I have tried. But there seems to be something in drink which puts aside help: the only fighting of any worth must come from the man himself — is it not so?"

"I have fought, lass."

"Drink up your tea, my man, and fight it again. Come home to me earlier, and with a firmer step, and each night will be a victory, better worth than all the cries and sobbings in the world."

He gazed at her stupidly as she put out a hand and laid it gently on his wrist. He covered his eyes.

"I — struck — you!" he muttered.

She winced. Startled by the sudden withdrawal of her touch, he lowered his hand and looked at her. Her eyes, though brimming, met his steadily.

"Tears are for women," she said. "I must cry a little: but see, I am not afraid."

For some months after this he fought the drink; fought it steadily. With Christmas came a relapse, through which she nursed him. To her dismay she found the fit, during the few days that it lasted, more violent than before, and thought of the house swept and

garnished and the devil returning with others worse than himself. Her consolation was that at his worst now he seemed to turn to her, and depend on her — almost to supplicate — for help. The struggle left them both exhausted: but he had not attempted to beat her this time. She tried to persuade herself that this meant amendment, and that the outbreaks would grow rarer and at length cease altogether.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1731 his health improved, and with it his kindness to her. Indeed, she had not been so near happiness (or so she told herself) since her wedding day. Another child was coming; Hope, so often cut down, grew again in her heart. And then —

One forenoon in the second week of June — a torrid, airless day — he came home reeling. For the moment a black fear fell on her that she would be too weak to wrestle with this attack; but she braced herself to meet it.

The next day her uncle called. He was about to start on a long-planned journey to Epworth, taking his man with him; and having lately parted with his housekeeper, he had a proposal to make, that Hetty should sleep at Johnson's Court and look after the house in his absence.

She shook her head. Luckily her husband was out, drinking fiercely at some tavern as she very well knew; but anything was better than his encountering uncle Matthew just now.

"Why not?" the old man urged. "It would save

my hiring a caretaker, and tide me over until I bring back Patty with me, as I hope to do. Besides, after travelling in those wilds I shall want to return and find the house cheerful: and I know I can depend on you for that."

"And I promise that you shall have it. Send me but word of your coming, and all shall be ready for you that you require."

"But you will not take up your abode there?"

She shook her head again, still smiling: but the smile had lost connection with her thoughts. She was listening for her husband's unsteady step and praying God to detain it.

"But why not?" uncle Matthew persisted. "It is not for lack of good will, I know. Your husband can spare you for a few days: or for that matter he might come with you and leave the house at night to young Ritson." This was Mr. Wright's apprentice, the same that had fetched him out of the King's Oak; an exemplary youth, who slept as a rule in a garret at the top of the house.

"Tom Ritson is not lodging with us just now: we have found a room for him two doors away." She had, indeed, packed off the youth at the first sign of his master's returning madness: but, lest uncle Matthew should guess the true reason, she added, "Women in my state take queer fancies — likes and dislikes."

The old man eyed her for a while, then asked abruptly, "Is your husband drinking again?"

"How — what makes you — I don't understand," she

stammered. Do what she might she could not prevent the come-and-go of colour in her face.

"Oh, yes you do. Tut, tut, my dear! I've known it every whit as long as you. Look here; would you like me to put off my journey for a few days?"

"On no account. There's not the least reason, I assure you, uncle."

He seemed content with this and talked for a little while of the journey and his plans. He had warned nobody at Epworth. "I intend it for a surprise," he explained; "to learn with my own eyes how they are faring." Emilia and Kezzy were at home now upon a holiday: for some months they had been earning their livelihood at Lincoln as teachers in a boarding-school kept by a Mrs. Taylor. He might even make a trip to Scarborough, to drink the waters there. He was gravely kind, and promised to deliver all Hetty's messages to her sisters.

"Well, well," he said as he rose to go, "so you won't come to me?"

"I cannot."

"Nevertheless I shall leave word that the house is to be open to you — in case of need." He looked at her meaningly, kissed her on the forehead, and so took his leave.

At the street door he paused. "And that poor soul is childless," he muttered. "She that should have been a noble mother of soldiers!"

## VI

### *From Mrs. Wesley to her son John*

Epworth, *July 12th*, 1731.

MY brother Wesley had designed to have surprised us, and had travelled under a feigned name from London to Gainsborough; but there, sending his man for guide out to the Isle the next day, the man told one that keeps our market his master's name, and that he was going to see his brother, which was the minister at Epworth. The man he informed met with Molly in the market about an hour before my brother got thither. She, full of news, hastened home and told us her uncle Wesley was coming to see us; but we could hardly believe her. 'Twas odd to observe how all the town took the alarm and were upon the gaze, as if some great prince had been about to make his entry. He rode directly to John Dawson's[1]: but we had soon notice of his arrival, and sent John Brown with an invitation to our house. He expressed some displeasure at his servant for letting us know of his coming: for he intended to have sent for Mr. Wesley to dine with him at Dawson's and then come to visit us in the afternoon. However, he soon followed John home, where we were all ready to receive him with great satisfaction.

[1] The inn.

His behaviour among us was perfectly civil and obliging. He spake little to the children the first day, being employed (as he afterwards told them) in observing their carriage and seeing how he liked them: afterwards he was very free, and expressed great kindness to them all.

He was strangely scandalized at the poverty of our furniture, and much more at the meanness of the children's habit. He always talked more freely with your sisters of our circumstances than with me; and told them he wondered what his brother had done with his income, for 'twas visible he had not spent it in furnishing his house, or clothing his family.

We had a little talk together sometimes, but it was not often we could hold a private conference, and he was very shy of speaking anything relating to the children before your father, or indeed of any other matter. I informed him, as far as I handsomely could, of our losses, etc., for I was afraid that he should think I was about to beg of him; but the girls, I believe, told him everything they could think on.

He was particularly pleased with Patty; and one morning, before Mr. Wesley came down, he asked me if I was willing to let Patty go and stay a year or two with him at London? "Sister," says he, "I have endeavoured already to make one of your children easy while she lives, and if you please to trust Patty with me, I will endeavour to make her so too." Whatever others may think, I thought this a generous offer, and the more so, because he had done so much for Sukey and Hetty.

I expressed my gratitude as well as I could, and would have had him speak with your father, but he would not himself — he left that to me; nor did he ever mention it to Mr. Wesley till the evening before he left us.

He always behaved himself very decently at family prayers, and in your father's absence said grace for us before and after meat. Nor did he ever interrupt our privacy, but went into his own chamber when we went into ours.

He staid from Thursday to the Wednesday after, then he left us to go to Scarborough, from whence he returned the Saturday se'nnight, intending to stay with us a few days; but finding your sisters gone the day before to Lincoln, he would leave us on Sunday morning, for he said he might see the girls before they — he and Patty — set forward for London. He overtook them at Lincoln, and had Mrs. Taylor, Emily, Kezzy, with the rest, to supper with him at the Angel. On Monday they breakfasted with him; then they parted, expecting to see him no more till they came to London, but on Wednesday he sent his man to invite them to supper at night. On Thursday he invited them to dinner, at night to supper, and on Friday morning to breakfast, when he took his leave of them and rode for London. They got into town on Saturday about noon, and that evening Patty writ me an account of her journey.

Dear Jackey, I can't stay now to talk about Hetty, but this — I hope better of her than some others do. I pray God to bless you. Adieu. S. W.

Hetty had been warned that her uncle and Patty would arrive on the Saturday. She did not expect them before evening; nevertheless, in the forenoon she sallied out, and stopping in the market on her way to buy a large bunch of roses, walked to Johnson's Court, where the door was opened to her by her own cook-maid—a fearless, middle-aged Scotswoman who did not mind inhabiting an empty house, and whom she had sent to uncle Matthew on the eve of his departure, as well to get her out of the way as to relieve him of his search for a caretaker.

Janet noted that her mistress's face was pale and her eyes unnaturally bright with want of sleep, but held her tongue, being ever a woman of few words. Together the two dressed the table and set out the cold viands in case the travellers should arrive in time for dinner. The rest of the meal would be sent in at a few minutes' notice from the tavern at the entrance of the court.

Having seen to these preparations and paid a visit of inspection to the bedrooms, she set out on her way back to Frith Street just as St. Dunstan's clock was striking eleven. She left, promising Janet to return before nightfall.

Night was dusking down upon the narrow court as she entered it again out of the rattle of Fleet Street. She had lost her springy gait, and dragged her legs heavily under the burden of the unborn child and a strain which during the past four or five days had become a physical torture. She came out of her own thoughts with an effort, to wonder if the travellers had arrived.

Her eyes went up to the windows of uncle Matthew's parlour: and, while they rested there, the room within of a sudden grew bright. Janet had entered it with a lamp and, having set it down, came forward to draw the curtains and close the shutters. At the same moment in the other window an arm went up to the curtain and the slim figure of Patty stood dark against the lamplight. She stood for a moment gazing out upon the court; gazing, as it seemed to Hetty, straight down upon her. Hetty came to a halt, crouching in the dusk against the wall. Now that she knew of their arrival she had no wish to greet either her sister or her uncle: nay, as her own dark shadow overtook her — the thought of the drunkard at home in the lonely house — she knew that she could not climb to that lighted room and kiss and welcome them.

As her sister's hand drew the curtain, she turned and sped back down the court. She broke into a run. The pedestrians in the dim streets were as ghosts to her. "She ought not to have left him. Heaven alone knew how long this fit would last; but while it lasted her place was beside him." Twice, thrice she came to a dead stop, and panted with one hand at her breast, the other laid flat against a house-wall or the closed shutters of a shop, and so supporting her. Men peered into her face, passed on, but turned their heads to stare back at her, not doubting her a loose woman the worse for drink, but pierced with wonder, if not with pity, at her extraordinary beauty. She heeded them not, but always, as soon as she caught her breath again, ran on.

She turned the corner of Frith Street. Heaven knows

what she expected to see—the house in a blaze, perhaps: but the dingy thoroughfare lay quiet before her, with a shop here and there casting a feeble light across the paving stones. The murmur of the streets, and with it all sense of human help within call, fell away and were lost. She must face the horror alone.

The house was dark — all but one window, behind the yellow blind of which a light shone. She drew out her latchkey and at first fumbled at the opening with a shaking hand. Then she recalled her courage, found the latch at once, slipped in the key and pushed the door open.

No sound: the stairs stretched up before her into pitchy darkness. She held her breath; tried to listen. Still no sound but one in her ears — the thump-thump of her own overstrained heart. She closed the door as softly as she could, and mounted the first flight.

Hark! the sound of a step above, followed by a faint glimmer of light. At the turn of the stairs she looked up and faced him. He stood on the landing outside their bedroom door, with a candle held aloft. His eyes were blazing.

He must be met quietly, and quietly she went up. "See how quick I have been!" she said gaily, and her voice did not shake. She passed in by the open door. He followed her stupidly and set the candle down.

"They have arrived," she said, drawing off her mittens. Her eyes travelled round the room to assure her that no weapon lay handy, though for her own sake she had no wish to live.

"Come here," he commanded thickly.

"Yes, dear; what is it?"

"Where have you been?"

"Why, to Johnson's Court, as you know."

"Conspiring against me, eh?" He pushed his face close to hers: his reeking breath sickened her: but she smiled on, expecting him to strike.

"Come here!"—though she was close already. "Stand up. I'll teach you to gossip about me. You and your gentry, my fine madam. I'll teach you—I'll teach you!"

He struck now, blow after blow. She turned her quivering shoulders to it, shielding the unborn child.

He beat her to her knees. Still she curved her back, holding her arms stiffly before her, leaving her head and neck exposed. Would the next blow kill her? She waited.

The table went over with a crash, the light with it. He must have fallen across it: for an instant later, she heard the thud of his head against the floor.

It seemed to her that she crouched there for an endless while, waiting for him to stir. He lay close beside her foot.

Her heel touched him as she rose. She groped for the tinder-box, found the candle, lit it, held it over him.

A trickle of blood ran from his right temple, where it had struck against the bed-post. His eyes were closed. She loosened his collar, put forth all her strength—her old maiden strength for a moment restored to her—and lifted him on to the bed.

By-and-by his lips parted in a sigh. He began to

breathe heavily — to sleep, as she thought. Still the blood trickled slowly from his temple and on to the pillow. She stepped to the water-jug, dipped her handkerchief in it, and drawing a chair to the bedside, seated herself and began to bathe the wound.

When the bleeding stopped, as the touch of cold water appeared to soothe him, she fetched a towel and pressed it gently about his neck and behind his ears. He was sleeping now: for he smiled and muttered something. Almost she thought it was her own name.

Still she sat beside him, her body aching, her heart cold; and watched him, hour after hour.

## VII

"AND my brothers visit her?"

Twilight with invisible veils closed around Epworth, its parsonage, and the high-walled garden where Molly, staff in hand, limped to and fro beside Johnny Whitelamb — promoted now to be the Reverend John Whitelamb, B.A. He had arrived that afternoon, having walked all the way from Oxford.

— "Whenever they visit London," he answered. "Charles, you know, upheld her from the first, and John has come to admit that her sufferings have lifted her above man's judgment. They talk with her as with their equal in wit — "

"Why, and so she is!"

"No doubt: but it does not follow that John would acknowledge it. They report their Oxford doings to her, and their plans: and she listens eagerly and advises. To me the strange thing is, as she manages it, that her interest does not tie her down to sharing their opinions. She speaks always as a looker-on, and they recognize this. She keeps her own mind, just as she has always held to her own view of her marriage. I have never heard her complain, and to her husband she is an angel: yet I am sure (without being able to tell you why) that her heart condemns your father and will always condemn him."

"She knows what her punishment has been: we can only guess. Does the man drink still?"

"Yes; he drinks: but she is no longer anxious about him. Your uncle Matthew told me that in his first attacks he used to be no better than a madman. Something happened: nobody seems to know precisely what it was, except that he fell and injured his head. Now the craving for drink remains, but he soaks harmlessly. No doubt he will kill himself in time; meanwhile even at his worst he is tractable, and obeys Hetty like a child. To do the man justice, he was always fond of her."

"Poor Hetty!"

"John has spoken to her once or twice about her soul, I believe: but he does not persist."

"H'm," said Molly, "you had better say that he is biding his time. John always persists."

"That's true," he owned with a laugh: "but I have never known him so baffled to all appearance. The fact is, she cannot be roused to any interest in herself. Of others she never ceases to think. It was she, for instance—when I could not afford to buy myself a gown for ordination—who started the notion of a subscription in the family." He was wearing the gown now, and drew it about him with another laugh. "Hence the majestic figure I cut before you at this moment."

"But we all subscribed, sir. You shall not slight my poor offering—all made up as it was of dairy-pence."

"Miss Molly, all my life is a patchwork made up of

kind deeds and kind thoughts from one or other of you. You do not believe —"

"Nay, you love us all, John. I know that well enough."

For some reason a silence fell between them. Molly broke it with a laugh, which nevertheless trembled a little. "Then your gown should be a patchwork, too?"

"Why, to be sure it is," he answered gravely; "and I wish the world could see it so, quartered out upon me like a herald's coat, and each quartering assigned — that is Mr. Wesley's, and that your mother's, and that, again, your brother John's —"

"And the sleeve Miss Molly's: I will be content with a sleeve. Only it must have the armorial bearings proper to a fourth daughter, with my simple motto — 'Butter and New-laid Eggs.'"

The sound of their merriment reached Mrs. Wesley through an open window, and in the dim kitchen she smiled to herself.

"But," objected he, "the sleeve will not do. I do not wear my heart upon my sleeve, Molly." She turned her head abruptly. For the first time in his life he had dared to call her Molly, and was trembling at his boldness. At first he took the movement for a prompt rebuke: then, deciding that she had not heard, he was at once relieved and disappointed.

But be sure she had heard. And she was not angry: only — this was not the old Johnny Whitelamb, but another man in speech and accent, and she felt more than a little afraid of him.

"Tell me more of Hetty," she commanded, and resting one hand on her staff pointed to the south-west, where, over the coping of the wall, out of a pure green chasm infinitely deep between reddened clouds of sunset, the evening star looked down.

He knew the meaning of the sudden gesture. Had not Hetty ever been her star?

"She is beautiful as ever. You never saw so sad a face: the sadder because it is never morose."

"I believe, John, you loved her best of us all."

"I worshipped her. To be her servant, or her dog, would have been enough for me. I never dared to think of her as — as —"

— "As you thought, for example, of her crippled sister, whom you protected."

"Molly!" He drew back. "Ah, if I dared — if I dared!" she heard him stammer, and faced him swiftly, with a movement he might have misread for anger, but for the soul shining in her eyes.

"Dare, then!"

. . .

"But I am penniless," said he, a few moments later. For him the heavens still spun and the earth reeled: but out of their turmoil this hard truth emerged as a rock from the withdrawing flood.

"God will provide for us. He knows that I cannot wait — and you — you must forget that I was unmaidenly and wooed you: for I *did*, and it's useless to deny it. But I have known — known — oh, for ever so long! And I have a short while to be happy!"

Either he did not hear or he let slip her meaning. His eyes were on the star, now almost level with the wall's coping.

"And this has come to me: to me—that was once Johnny Whitelamb of the Charity School!"

"And to me," she murmured; "to me—poor Grizzle, whom even her parents despised. The stars shine upon all."

"I remember," he said, musing, "at Oxford, one night, walking back to college with your brother John. We had been visiting the prisoners in Bocardo. As we turned into the Turl between Exeter and Jesus colleges there, at the end of the street—it is little more than a lane—beyond the spire of All Saints' this planet was shining. John told me its name, and with a sudden accord we stood still for a moment, watching it. 'Do you believe it inhabited?' I asked. 'Why not?' he said. 'Then why not, as this world, by sinners: and if by sinners, by souls crying for redemption in Christ?' 'Ay,' said he, 'for aught we know the son of God may pass along the heavens adding martyrdom to martyrdom, may even at this moment be bound on a cross in some unseen planet swinging around one in this multitude of stars. But,' he broke off, 'what have we to do with this folly of speculation? This world is surely parish enough for a man, and in it he may be puzzled all his days to save his own soul out of the many millions.'"

"And father," murmured Molly, "designs him to take Epworth cure! But why are you telling me this?"

"Because I see now that if God's love reaches up to

every star and down to every poor soul on earth, it must be something vastly simple, so simple that all dwellers on earth may be assured of it, as all who have eyes may be assured of the planet yonder; and so vast that all bargaining is below it, and they may inherit it without considering their deserts. Is not God's love greater than human? Yet, see, this earthly love has come to me — Johnny Whitelamb — as to a king. It has taken no account of my worth, my weakness: in its bounty I am swallowed up and do not weigh. To dream of it as holding tally with me is to belittle and drag it down in thought to something scarcely larger than myself. I share it with kings, as I share this star. Can I think God's love less magnificent?"

But Molly shrank close to him. "Dear, do not talk of these great things: they frighten me. I am so small — and we have so short a while to be happy!"

## VIII

### *Samuel Wesley to the Lord Chancellor*

Westminster, *January 14th*, 1733-4.

MY LORD, — The small rectory of Wroote, in the diocese and county of Lincoln, adjoining to the Isle of Axholme, is in the gift of the Lord Chancellor, and more than seven years since it was conferred on Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth. It lies in our low levels, and is often overflowed — four or five years since I have had it; and the people have lost most or all the fruits of the earth to that degree that it has hardly brought me in fifty pounds per annum, *omnibus annis*, and some years not enough to pay my curate there his salary of £30 a year.

This living, by your lordship's permission and favour, I would gladly resign to one Mr. John Whitelamb, born in the neighbourhood of Wroote, as his father and grandfather lived in it, when I took him from among the scholars of a charity school, founded by one Mr. Travers, an attorney, brought him to my house, and educated him there, where he was my amanuensis for four years in transcribing my "Dissertations on the Book of Job," now well advanced in the press; and drawing my maps and figures for it, as well as we could by the light of nature. After this I sent him to Oxford, to my son John Wesley, Fellow

of Lincoln College, under whom he made such proficiency that he was the last summer admitted by the Bishop of Oxford into Deacon's Orders, and placed my curate in Epworth, while I came up to town to expedite the printing my book.

Since I was here I gave consent to his marrying one of my seven daughters, and they are married accordingly; and though I can spare little more with her, yet I would gladly give them a little glebe land at Wroote, where I am sure they will not want *springs of water.* But *they* love the place, though I can get nobody else to reside on it. If I do not flatter myself, he is indeed a valuable person, of uncommon brightness, learning, piety, and indefatigable industry; always loyal to the King, zealous for the Church, and friendly to our Dissenting Brethren; and for the truth of this character I will be answerable to God and man. If therefore your lordship will grant me the favour to let me resign the living unto him, and please to confer it on him, I shall always remain your lordship's most bounden, most grateful, and most obedient servant,

SAMUEL WESLEY, Sen.

The Lord Chancellor complied: and so, in February, with an income of but fifty pounds a year, increased to seventy by Mr. Wesley's kindness, but in good heart and hope and such love as can only be between two simple hearts that have proved each other, John Whitelamb and Molly took possession of the small parsonage.

They were happy: and of their happiness there is no

more to be said, save that it was brief. In the last days of October Molly's child was born, and died: and a few hours later while the poor man held her close, refusing to believe, with a sigh Molly's spirit slipped between his arms and went to God.

To God? It tore the man up by the roots, and the root-soil of his faith crumbled and fell with the moulds upon her coffin. He went from her graveside back to the house and closed the door. Mrs. Wesley had urged him to return with the family to Epworth, and John, who had ridden from Oxford to preach the funeral sermon, shook him by the hand and added his persuasions. But the broken husband thanked him shortly, and strode away. He had sat through the sermon without listening to a word: and now he went back to a house lonely even of God.

He and Molly had been too poor to keep a servant: but on the eve of her illness a labourer's wife had been hired to do the housework and cook the meals. And seeing his lethargy, this sensible woman, without asking questions, continued to arrive at seven in the morning and depart at seven in the evening. He ate the food she set before him. On Sunday he heard the bell ringing from his church hard by. But he had prepared no sermon: and after the bell had ceased he sat in his study before an open book, oblivious.

Yet prayer was read, and a sermon preached, in Wroote Church that day. John Wesley had walked over from Epworth; and when the bell ceased ringing, and the minutes passed, and still no rector appeared, had stepped quietly to the reading desk.

After service he walked across to the parsonage, knocked gently at the study door and entered.

"Brother Whitelamb," he said, "you have need of us, I think, and I know that my father has need of you. To-morrow I return to Oxford, and I leave a letter with him that he will wish to answer. Death has shaken him by the hand and it cannot guide a pen: he will be glad to employ his old amanuensis. What is more, his answer to my letter will contain much worth your pondering, as well as mine, for it will be concerned with even such a spiritual charge as you have this day been neglecting."

"Brother Wesley," answered the widower, looking up, "you have done a kind deed this morning. But what was your text?"

"My text was, 'Son of man, behold I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet shalt thou not mourn or weep, neither shall thy tears run down.'"

"I love you, brother: you have ever been kind indeed to me. Yet you put it in my mind at times, that the poor servant with one talent had some excuse if a poor defence, who said 'I know thee, that thou art a hard man.'"

"Do I reap then where I have not sown, and gather where I have not strewn?"

"I will not say that. But I see that others prepare the way for you and will do so, as Charles prepared it at Oxford: and finding it prepared, you take command and march onward. You were born to take command: the hand of God is evident upon you. But some grow faint by the way and drop behind, and you have no bowels for these."

Silence fell between them. John Whitelamb broke it. "I can guess what your father's letter will be — a last appeal to you to succeed him in Epworth parish. Do you mean to consent?"

"I think not. My reasons —"

"Nay, it is certain you will not. And as for your reasons, they do not matter: they may be good, but God has better, who decides for you. Yet deal gently with the old man, for you are denying the dearest wish of his heart."

"May I tell him that you will come?"

"I will come when he sends for me."

Mr. Wesley's message did not arrive until a good fortnight later, during which time John Whitelamb had fallen back upon his own sorrow. He resumed his duties, but with no heart. From the hour of his wife's death he sank gradually into the rut of a listless parish priest — a solitary man, careless of his dress as of his duties, loved by his parishioners for the kindness of his heart. They said that sorrow had broken him; but the case was worse than this. He had lost assurance of God's goodness.

He could not, with such a doubt in his heart, go to his wife's family for comfort. He loved them as ever; but he could not trust their love to deal tenderly with his infidelity. No Wesley would ever have let a human sorrow interfere with faith: no Wesley (it seemed to him) would understand such a disaster. It was upon this thought that he had called John a hard man. He recognized the truth and that he was but brittle earthenware beside these hammered vessels of service.

Nevertheless, when in obedience to Mr. Wesley's message he presented himself at Epworth, he was surprised by the calm everyday air with which the old man received him. He had expected at least some word of his grief, some fatherly pressure of the hand. There was none. He knew, to be sure, that old age deadened sensibility. But, after all, his dear Molly had been this man's child, if not the best-beloved.

"Son Whitelamb, my hand is weary, and there is much to write. Help me to my dearest wish on earth — the only wish now left to me: help me that Jack may inherit Epworth cure when I am gone. Hear what he objects: 'The question is not whether I could do more good there or here in Oxford, *but whether I could do more good to myself*; seeing wherever I can be most holy myself, there I can most promote holiness in others. But I can improve myself more at Oxford than at any other place.' The lad must think I forget my logic. See you, he juggles me with identical propositions! First it is no question of doing good to others, but to himself; and anon when he does most good to himself he will do most good to others. Am I a dead dog, to be pelted with such sophisms? Son Whitelamb, is your pen ready?"

"Of what avail is this?" John Whitelamb asked himself. "These men, father and son, decide first, and, having decided, find no lack of arguments. It is but pride of the mind in which they clothe their will. Moreover, if there be a God, what a vain conflict am I aiding! seeing that time with Him is not, and all has been decided from the beginning."

Yet he took down the answer with his habitual care, glancing up in the pauses at the old face, gray and intense beneath the dark skull-cap. The letter ended:

"If you are not indifferent whether the labours of an aged father for above forty years in God's vineyard be lost, and the fences of it trodden down and destroyed; if you have any care for our family, which must be dismally shattered as soon as I am dropped; if you reflect on the dear love and longing which this dear people has for you, whereby you will be enabled to do God the more service; and the plenteousness of the harvest, consisting of near two thousand souls, whereas you have not many more scholars in the University; you may perhaps alter your mind, and bend your will to His, who has promised, if in all our ways we acknowledge Him, He will direct our paths."

# CONCLUSION

## I

"UNTO him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness."

All the world has heard how John Wesley rode, eight years later, into Epworth; and how, his father's pulpit having been denied to him, he stood outside upon his father's tomb and preached evening after evening in the warm June weather the gospel of Justification by Faith to the listening crowd. Visitors are shown the grit slab, now recut and resting on a handsome structure of stone, but then upon plainest brickwork: and are bidden to notice, in the blank space below the words, "Their works do follow them," two rough pieces of ironstone which mark where the preacher's feet rested.

Eight evenings he preached from it, and on the third evening chose for his text these words: "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness."

Under a sycamore by the churchyard wall at a little distance from the crowd a man stood and listened — a clergyman in a worn black gown, a man not old in years but with a face prematurely old and shoulders that already stooped under the burden of life — John White-

lamb. He watched between fear and hope to be recognized. When the preacher mounted the slab, stroked back his hair and, turning his face towards the sycamore, fixed his eyes (as it seemed) upon the figure beneath it, he felt sure he had been recognized: a moment later he doubted whether that gaze had passed over him in forgetfulness or contempt.

He felt himself worthy of contempt. They had been too hard for him, these Wesleys. They had all departed from Epworth, years before, and left him, who had been their brother, alone with his miserable doubts. No letters, no message of remembered affection or present good will, ever came from them. He had been unfaithful to his religion: they had cast him off. For seven years he had walked and laboured among the men and women here gathered in the midsummer dusk: but the faces to which he had turned for comfort were faces of the past — some dead, others far away.

So the preacher's voice came to him as one rending the sepulchre. "Son of man, can these bones live?" Yes, the bones of Christ's warrior beneath the slab — laid there to rest in utter weariness — were stirring, putting forth strength and a voice that pierced his living marrow. Ah, how it penetrated, unlocking old wells of tears!

He listened, letting his tears run. Only once did he withdraw his eyes, and then for a moment they fell on John Romley loitering, too, on the outskirts of the crowd by the churchyard gate and plainly in two minds about interfering. Romley was curate of Epworth now, delegate of an absentee sporting rector: and had in truth set this

ball rolling by denying John Wesley his pulpit. He had miscalculated his flock; this stubborn English breed so loyal in enmity, loving the memory of a foe who had proved himself a man. He watched with a loose-lipped sneer; too weak to conquer his own curiosity, far too weak to assert his authority and attempt to clear the churchyard of that "enthusiasm" which he had denounced in his most florid style last Sunday, within the church.

John Whitelamb's gaze travelled back to the preacher. Up to this he had heard the voice only, and the dead man in his grave below speaking through that voice. Now he listened to the words. If the dead man spoke through them, what a change had death wrought — what wisdom had he found in the dust that equals all! What had become of the old confident righteousness, the old pride of intellect? They were stripped and flung aside as filthy rags. "Apart from faith we do not count. We *are* redeemed: we *are* saved. Christ has made with us no bargain at all except to believe that the bargain is concluded. What are we at the best that He should make distinctions between us? We are all sinners and our infinitesimal grades of sin sunk in His magnificent mercy. Only acknowledge your sin: only admit the mercy; and you are healed, pardoned, made joint heirs with Christ — not in a fair way to be healed, not going to be pardoned in some future state; but healed, pardoned, your sins washed away in Christ's blood, actually, here and now."

He heard men and women — notorious evil-livers, some of them — crying aloud. Ah, the great simplicity of it was beyond him! — and yet not perhaps beyond him,

could he believe the truth, in the bygone years never questioned by him, that Jesus Christ was very God.

He waited for the last word and strode back to his lonely home with a mind unconvinced yet wondering at the power he had witnessed, a heart bursting with love.

He sat down to write at once: but tore up many letters. With Christ, to believe was to be forgiven. If Christ could not be tender to doubt, how much less would John Wesley be tender? It was not until Friday that he found courage to despatch the following:

Dear Brother,—I saw you at Epworth on Tuesday evening. Fain would I have spoken to you, but that I am quite at a loss to know how to address or behave to you.

Your way of thinking is so extraordinary that your presence creates an awe, as if you were an inhabitant of another world. God grant you and your followers may always have entire liberty of conscience. Will you not allow others the same?

Indeed I cannot think as you do, any more than I can help honouring and loving you. Dear sir, will you credit me? I retain the highest veneration and affection for you. The sight of you moves me strangely. My heart overflows with gratitude; I feel in a higher degree all that tenderness and yearning of bowels with which I am affected towards every branch of Mr. Wesley's family. I cannot refrain from tears when I reflect, This is the man who at Oxford was more than a father to me; this is he whom I have heard expound, or dispute publicly, or preach

at St. Mary's, with such applause; and — oh, that I should ever add — whom I have lately heard preach at Epworth, on his father's tombstone!

I am quite forgot. None of the family ever honour me with a line. Have I been ungrateful? I have been passionate, fickle, a fool; but I hope I never shall be ungrateful.

Dear sir, is it in my power to serve or oblige you in any way? Glad I should be that you would make use of me. God open all our eyes and lead us into truth wherever it be! JOHN WHITELAMB.

The answer was delivered to him that same evening. It ran:

DEAR BROTHER, — I take you at your word, if indeed it covers permission to preach in your church at Wroote on Sunday morning next. I design to take for text — and God grant it may be profitable to you and to others! — "Ask, and it shall be given you."

## II

FROM Epworth John Wesley rode on to Sheffield, and then southward through Coventry, Evesham, and Painswick to Bristol, preaching as he went, sometimes thrice a day: from Bristol to Cardiff and back; and so, on Sunday evening, July 18th, towards London. On Tuesday morning he dismounted by the door of the Foundry, having left it just two months before.

To his surprise it was opened by Hetty: but at once he guessed the reason.

"Mother?"

"Hist! The end is very near—a few hours perhaps." She kissed him. "I have been with her these five days, taking turns with the others. They are all here—Emmy and Sukey and Nancy and Pat. Charles cannot be fetched in time, I fear."

"He was in North Wales when he last wrote."

"Listen!"—a sound of soft singing came down the stairway. "They are singing his hymn to her: she begs us constantly to sing to her."

"Jesu, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly
While the nearer waters roll—"

sang the voices overhead as John followed his sister into the small sitting-room.

"What do the doctors say?"

"There is nothing to be said. She feels no pain; has no disease. It is old age, brother, loosening the cords."

"She is happy?"

"Ah, so happy!" Hetty's eyes brimmed with tears and she turned away.

"Sister, that happiness is for you too. Why have you, alone of us, so far rejected it?"

"No—not now!" she protested. "Speak to me some other time and I will listen: not now, when my body and heart are aching!"

Her sisters sang:

"Other refuge have I none;
  Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
  Still support and comfort me!
All my trust on Thee is stay'd,
  All my help from Thee I bring:
Cover my defenceless head
  With the shadow of Thy wing!"

She stepped to the door with a feeble gesture of the hands. She knew that, worn as he was with his journey, if she gave him the chance he would grasp it and pause, even while his mother panted her last, to wrestle for and win a soul—not because she, Hetty, was his sister; simply because hers was a soul to be saved. Yes, and she foresaw that sooner or later he would win: that she would be swept into the flame of his conquest: yet her poor bruised spirit shrank back from the flame. She craved only to be let alone, she feared all new experi-

ence, she distrusted even the joy of salvation. Life had been too hard for Hetty.

He followed her up the stairs to his mother's room, and entering commanded his sisters with a gesture to sing the hymn to an end. They did so. Mrs. Wesley lay propped on the pillows, her wasted face turned to the light, a faint smile on her lips. For a little while after the hymn ended she lay silent with no change on her face. They doubted if she saw John or, seeing, had recognized him. But by-and-by her lips moved and she murmured his name.

"Jacky!"

He stepped to the bedside, and with his hand covered the transparent hand with its attenuated marriage ring.

"I like them — to sing to me," she whispered. "When — when I am released — sing — a psalm of praise to God. Promise me."

He pressed her hand for reply, and her eyes closed peacefully. She seemed to sleep.

It was not until Friday that the end came. Shortly before eleven that morning she waked suddenly out of slumber with lips muttering rapidly. They, bending close, caught the words "Saviour — dear Saviour — help — at the last." By the time they had summoned John, though the muttering continued, the words were unintelligible: yet they knew she was praising God.

In a little while the voice ceased and she lay staring calmly upwards. From three to four o'clock the last cords were loosening. Suddenly John arose, and lifting his hand in benediction, spoke the words of the Com-

mendatory Prayer: "O Almighty God, in whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prison; we humbly commend the soul of this thy servant, our dear Mother, into thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour, most humbly beseeching thee that it may be precious in thy sight. . . ."

It was Hetty who bent low, took the inert hand, and after listening for a while laid it softly down on the coverlet. All was over: yet she listened until the voices of the watchers, released by her signal, rose together —

"Hark! a voice divides the sky —
Happy are the faithful dead
In the Lord who sweetly die —"

She raised her face as if to entreat for yet a moment's respite. But their faces were radiant, transfigured with the joy of their faith. And then suddenly, certainly, in their rapture she saw the purpose and end of all their common sufferings: want, hunger, years of pinching and striving, a thousand petty daily vexations, all the hardships that had worn her mother down to this poor corpse upon the bed, her own sorrowful fate and her sisters' only less sorrowful — all caught up in the hand of God and blazing as a two-edged sword of flame. Across the blaze, though he was far away, she saw the confident eyes of Charles smiling as at a prophecy fulfilled. But the hand outstretched for the sword was John's, claiming it by right indefeasible. She, too, had a right indefeasible: and before the sword descended to cleave the walls

of this humble death chamber and stretch over England, her heart cried and claimed to be pierced with it. "Let it pierce me and cut deep, for my tears, too, have tempered it!"

*From the Journal of Charles Wesley for the year* 1750

"*March 5th.* I prayed by my sister Wright, a gracious, tender, trembling soul; a bruised reed which the Lord will not break.

"*March 14th.* I found my sister Wright very near the haven"; and again on Sunday, the 18th: "Yet still in darkness, doubts, and fears, against hope believing in hope."

"*March 21st.* At four I called on my brother Wright, a few minutes after her spirit was set at liberty. I had sweet fellowship with her in explaining at the chapel those solemn words, 'Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.'

"*March 26th.* I followed her to her quiet grave, and wept with them that weep."

# EPILOGUE

EARLY in December, 1803, in the cool decline of a torrid day, a small British force — mixed regulars and sepoys — threaded its way among the mountains of Berar. It moved slowly and with frequent halts, its pace regulated by the middle of the column, where teams of men panted and dragged at the six guns which were to batter down the hill fortress of Gawul Ghur: for roads in this country there were none, and all the long day ahead of the guns gangs laboured with pick and shovel to widen the foot-tracks leading up to the passes.

Still further ahead trudged and halted the 74th regiment, following a squadron of the 19th Light Dragoons, and now and again the toilers on the middle slope, taking breath for a new effort and blinking the sweat from their eyes, would catch sight of a horseman on a ridge far overhead, silhouetted against the pale blue sky for a moment while he scanned a plateau or gully unseen by them. Now and again, too, in such pauses, the clear air pulsed with the tramp of the rear-guard in the lower folds of the hills — sepoys and comrades of the 78th and 94th.

Though with arms, legs, and loins strained almost to cracking, the men worked cheerfully. Their General had ridden forward with his staff: they knew that close by the head of the pass their camp was already being marked

out for them, and before sleeping they would be fed as they deserved.

They growled, indeed, but good-humouredly, when, for the tenth time that day, they came to the edge of a gully into which the track plunged steeply to mount almost as steeply on the farther side: and their good humour did them the more credit since the General had forbidden them to lock the wheels, on the ground that locking shook and weakened the gun-carriages.

With a couple of drag-ropes then, and a dozen men upon each, digging heels in the slope, slipping, cursing, back-hauling with all their weight, the first gun was trailed down and run across the gully. As the second began its descent a couple of horsemen came riding slowly back from the advance-guard and drew rein above the farther slope to watch the operation.

About a third of the way down, the track, which trended at first to the left, bent abruptly away to the right, from the edge of a low cliff of rock; and at this corner the men on the drag-ropes must also fling themselves sharply to the right to check the wheels on the verge of the fall. They did so, cleverly enough: but almost on the instant were jerked out of their footholds like puppets. Amid outcries of terror and warning, the outer wheel of the gun broke through the crumbling soil on the verge, the ropes flew through their hands, tearing away the flesh before the flesh could cast off its grip; and with a clatter of stones the gun somersaulted over the slope. With it, caught by the left-hand rope before he could spring clear, went hurling a man. They saw his bent shoulders strike

a slab of rock ripped bare an instant before, and heard the thud as he disappeared.

As they ran to view the damage, the two riders came cantering across the gully and joined them. By good fortune, at the base of the rock there welled a tiny spring and spread itself in a miniature bog before making up its mind to leap down the mountain-side and feed the infant waters of the Taptee. Into this plashy soil the gun had plunged and the carriage lay some yards away up-ended on a broken wheel, but otherwise uninjured. Beside the carriage, when the General reached it, an artillery sergeant and three of the team of No. 2 gun were lifting the injured man.

"Badly hurt?"

The sergeant saluted. "We doubt it's over with him, sir. His back's broken, seemingly."

The General turned away to examine the face of the cliff, and almost at once gave vent to a low whistle.

"See here, Ellerton, the rock is caverned and the gun must have broken through the roof. It doesn't look to me like a natural cavern, either. Hi! half-a-dozen of you, clear away this rubbish and let me have a nearer look."

The men turned to and heaved away the fallen stones under which the water oozed muddily.

"Just as I thought! Nature never made a hole like this."

An exclamation interrupted him. It came from one of the relief party who had clambered into the cavern and was spading there in the loose soil.

"What is it?"

"A skeleton, sir! — stretched here as natural as life."

The General dismounted and clambered to the entrance followed by his staff officer. As they reached it, the man stooped again and rose with something in his hand.

"Eh? A begging-bowl?"

"Not a doubt of it," said the staff officer, as his chief passed it to him. He examined it, turning it slowly over in his hands. "It's clear enough, though curious. We have struck the den of some old hermit of the hills, some holy man —"

"Who pitched his camp here for the sake of the water-spring, no doubt."

"Queer taste," said the staff officer sagely. "I wonder how the deuce he picked up his food."

"Oh, the hill-men hereabouts will travel leagues to visit and feed such a man."

"That doesn't explain why his bones lie unburied."

"No." The General mused for a moment. "Found anything else?" he demanded sharply.

The searchers reported "Nothing," and wished to know if they should bring the skeleton out into the light.

"No: cover him up decently, and fall in to limber up the gun!" He took his horse's bridle and walked back to the group about the injured man.

"Who is he?"

He was told, a corporal of the 94th who had volunteered for the gun team two days before. The sergeant who reported this added diffidently, "He had half-a-dozen of his religious mates in the team. He's a Wesleyan Methodist, sir, begging your pardon."

"Are you one?"

The sergeant saluted.

"He was the best man in his company and — and," he added with a touch of awe, "he was converted by Charles Wesley himself — at Bristol in 'eighty, so he's told us — and him aged but sixteen."

The General bent with sudden interest as the dying man opened his eyes. After scanning his face for a moment or two, he said gently:

"My man, they tell me you knew Charles Wesley."

The corporal painfully bent his brows, on which the last sweat was gathering. "Is that — the General?" he gasped with a feeble effort to salute. Then his brain seemed to clear suddenly and he answered, not as soldier to commanding officer, but as man to man. "He converted me. Praise be to God!"

"You are going to him. You know?"

The corporal nodded.

"And you may take him a message from me: for he once did me a handsome turn, too — though not in that way. You may tell him — for I watched you with the guns to-day — that I pass you for a good soldier. You may tell him and his brother John that I wish to command no better followers than theirs. Now, is there anything I can do for you?"

The man looked up into the eyes of the sergeant bending over him, muttered a word or two, slowly drew his palm up to his forehead; and so, with the self-same salute, parted from his earthly captain and met his eternal Captain in Heaven.

"What did he say?" asked the General.

"He was wishful not to be put away without a hymn, sir," answered the sergeant, drawing himself erect to "Attention" and answering respectfully through his captain who had drawn near, having limbered up his gun.

The General nodded and turned away to watch the lowering of the remaining guns. A new track had been cut and down it they were trailed without accident. One by one they crossed the gully. Then the rear regiments hove in sight with the ambulance. The dead man was lifted in and his carrying-party, Wesleyans all, fell into rank behind the light wagon as that, too, moved on.

"Ellerton," said the General suddenly as he gazed after them, "did you hear what I said to that poor fellow just now?"

"Yes, General, and wondered."

"It was true, though. If it hadn't been for Charles Wesley, I should never be here commanding these troops. Wesley or Wellesley, sir — spell the name as you will: the man who adopted my great-grandfather spelt it Wesley: and he moved heaven and earth to make Charles Wesley his heir before he condescended to us. The offer stood open for years, but Charles Wesley refused it. I never heard why."

"What — the hymn-man?"

"Even so. Odd story, is it not?"

The man who was to be the great Duke of Wellington stared for a moment, lost in thought, at his rear-guard mounting the farther slope of the gully. And as the

British guns rolled onward into the dusk, back from the glimmering pass were borne the words of Wesley, Handel's music wafting them on its majestic wings:

"Rejoice, the Lord is King!
  Your Lord and King adore:
Mortals, give thanks and sing
  And triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice —
  Rejoice! again I say, Rejoice!"